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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this essay and bibliography is to present a review of criticism of poet Charlotte Mew. The essay synthesizes the salient critical comments under the topics of historical context, language, obscurity, biography, distancing, religion and philosophy, technique, and male/female issues. It draws conclusions as to the comprehensiveness of the criticism and points out potential areas for further study. The extensive bibliography annotates biographical material about Mew and criticisms of her poetry from 1916 to 1989. The literature search on criticisms included periodicals, monographs, monograph chapters, and dissertations. Arrangement is chronological by publication date, and each entry is followed by an abstract of the document's contents. An alphabetical index to the authors of the appraisals is included. (Author/TMK)

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APPRAISALS OF CHARLOTTE MEW'S POETRY 1916-1989: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY AND CRITICAL ESSAY

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Library Science

by

Pamela Kircher

December, 1990

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ABSTRACT

Charlotte Mew's sixty-eight poems were admired by writers such as Thomas Hardy, H. D., and Siegfried Sassoon. Yet, when the whole of the criticism is looked at, the estimate varies widely from complete dismissal to Mew being named one of the best poets of the twentieth century.

Most of the criticism and biography is repetitious. Harold Monro, writing in 1920, first noted Mew's economy of language, use of persona and ordinary diction, her creation of meaning by associating disparate images. These same characteristics are the cornerstone of most subsequent articles. An unfortunate amount of writing speculates on Mew's personal life, guessing whether she was a lesbian or whether she had an affair with Thomas Hardy. Not until later in the twentieth century are the studies more in-depth, focusing in particular on Mew's religious images and her vision of a negated world.

This essay synthesizes the salient critical comments under the topics of historical context, language, obscurity, biography, distancing, religion and philosophy, technique, and male/female issues. Possibilities for further study are noted. The bibliography annotates biography about Mew and criticisms of her poetry from 1916 to 1989. The arrangement

is chronological by publication date. An alphabetical index to the authors of the appraisals is included.

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PREFACE

Red is the strangest pain to bear;
In Spring the leaves on the budding trees;
In Summer the roses are worse than these,
More terrible than they are sweet:
A rose can stab you across the street
Deeper than any knife:
And the crimson haunts you everywhere--
Thin shafts of sunlight, like the ghosts of reddened
swords have struck our stair
As if, coming down, you had split your life.

from "The Quiet House" by Charlotte Mew

It is difficult to give an idea of Charlotte Mew's poetry through an excerpt. Some of her poems verge on violence in the extremity of the thoughts, feelings, colors and images, as in "Madeleine in Church" or the description of the mad boy in "Ken." By contrast, other poems are placid, almost inert, but surrounded by a tense vibration in the language that indicates a latent energy. Mew's brief poem "In the Fields" turns from a description of a heavy, bright August day to question whether the eternal world of heaven can offer the stimulation the mutable world provides.

Will the strange heart of any everlasting thing
Bring me these dreams that take my breath away?
They come at evening with the home-flying rooks
and the scent of hay,
Over the fields. They come in Spring.

The purpose of this essay and bibliography is to present a review of the whole of Mew criticism. The reader

should be familiar with Mew's poems for several reasons. If poems are cited as examples, only the titles are given. Also, many critics make statements about Mew's work without citing examples. This occurs frequently in the early criticisms, which tend to be descriptive. The later criticisms tend to be more in-depth and particular, which is reflected in the length of the annotations on those works.

Mew's small body of poetry is not written in a homogenous syle. As a result critical comments are more contradictory than personal taste accounts for alone. The reader familiar with Mew's poems will be able to tell if critical judgments are based on a spectrum of Mew's poetry, or on a couple of facets. Suggestions for further study are noted. In particular, recurring images of stairs, ghosts, hair, the emphasis on the visual sense and the colors red and white need to be explicated.

Much of the published criticism alludes to Mew's life so a brief mention of the facts is necessary. Charlotte Mew was born in London in 1869, though the date is given frequently as 187Ø. She had a limited formal education at a girls' school, traveled abroad a few times, and lived most of her life with her sister Anne and her mother. Charlotte Mew's life is usually depicted as one of emotional and some financial deprivation. She was the daughter of an architect who did not make enough to live easily in the manner to which his wife was accustomed. Two of Charlotte's siblings

were institutionalized because of schizophrenia, a situation certain to cause additional emotional and financial strain.

Yet, Charlotte Mew was a writer and was rather successful from the beginning. She published nine short stories and eleven essays between 1894 and 1914. Her first publication was a short story in Yellow Book, though she subsequently published more frequently in Temple Bar and Englishwoman. Her first published poem, "The Farmer's Bride," appeared in the Nation in 1912. Most of her poetry was written between 1900 and 1916, when her first book was published by Harold Monro's Poetry Bookshop. On the strength of her poetry Mew was recommended for a British Civil List Pension in 1923 by Walter de la Mare, John Masefield and Thomas Hardy. She wrote very little after her first book was published. Shortly after her sister's death, Charlotte Mew committed suicide in 1928.

SCOPE

The bibliography includes biography about Charlotte Mew and criticisms of her poetry published from 1916 through 1989. Periodicals, monographs, monograph chapters, and dissertations written in English are included. Bibliographical sources published by December 1989 were searched.

An effort was made to acquire copies of all items. However, a number of early newspaper reviews were not obtained. If the unobtainable reviews were quoted in other

works, they are included in the annotated bibliography. These citations are labeled "Unverified" and are followed by the quotation which appeared in the reprinting source. The phrase "no original page cited" means the source in which the quotation was reprinted did not give the pagination of the original.

ARRANGEMENT

The introduction outlines the publication history of Mew's books of poetry. It also gives an idea of the literary context that surrounded her work in 1916 and the subsequent appraisal of the poetry of that era. Overall, Mew's poetry is considered a quirk of a remarkable personality; true explications of her poems are rare.

Parenthetical references are used in the introduction to cite sources, half of which do not appear in the annotated bibliography. Hence, the introduction is followed by its own bibliography in the reference list style.

The essay synthesizes and summarizes the course of critical evaluations from 1916 to 1989. It draws conclusions as to the comprehensiveness of the criticism and points out potential areas for further study. The source of each idea in the essay is noted by the name of the author of the original work. The year the work was published appears in parentheses. The annotations for the cited works are in the chronological bibliography. If no source is noted, the idea is my own.

The bibliography is arranged chronologically by year of publication. Within each year the works are arranged alphabetically by author. Unsigned reviews are entered under the phrase "Review of" in the year they were published.

See references are used between varying forms of the authors' names. For instance, Alida Klementaski married and published further essays as Alida Monro. All citations appear under "Monro, Alida" with a cross-reference from "Klementaski, Alida" when that was the name which appeared on the title page of the original publication. When a name consists solely of initials, a cross-reference is made from the direct order to the full name if it is known, or to an entry under the surname initial if the full name is not known.

An author's name wholly in brackets means the name is supplied from another source. The parts of an author's name in brackets (e.g. C[ockerell], S[ydney] C[arlyle]) are omitted in the original publication.

Each entry in the chronological bibliography is followed by an abstract of the document's contents. To a great extent the length of the annotation depends on the length, depth and complexity of the source. An alphabetical index to the authors of the appraisals and biographies is at the end. Unsigned reviews are not included in the index.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1916 Charlotte Mew published a small book of poems in London called The Farmer's Bride. Eleven poems were added to the original seventeen in an expanded version published in 1921. The New York publishing firm Macmillan imported 250 copies of that edition which were sold as Saturday Market. A third book, The Rambling Sailor, was published in 1929, one year after Mew's death.

Mew's poems were admired by many literary figures. Among them were Ezra Pound, Vita Sackville-West, Siegfried Sassoon, Virginia Woolf, Thomas Hardy and Marianne Moore (Fitzgerald 1988, 1). Her career was fostered by May Sinclair, who was considered to be the "heart of literary London" at that time, and by Catherine Amy Dawson-Scott, novelist and founder of P.E.N., a literary group (Warner 1981, x).

For the most part, Mew's context in literary history is determined more by her acquaintances than by her work's reputation or worth. All of her books were published by Harold Monro's Poetry Bookshop. The Poetry Bookshop also published a series between 1912 and 1922 called Georgian Poetry, which printed such poets as Rupert Brooke, W. H. Davies, and Walter de la Mare. Harold Monro lobbied Edward

Marsh, the Georgian poetry series editor, to include Mew in the series (Warner 1981, xi). Though Monro was unsuccessful, his effort appears to strengthen Mew's link with the Georgians.

Though the poetry of the Georgian movement varied in quality and style, it is generalized as pastoral and traditional. Its detractors thought it conservative and sentimental (Preminger 1974, 311). Nevertheless, the series was "widely influential and successful, bringing a fresh vision and manner into the tired poetry of the time" (Drabble 1985, 387). In reality Mew's work is distinguished from that of many Georgians because of "a restraint of expression combined with a powerful and passionate content (Drabble 1985, 645)." Marsh even felt she was too experimental (Warner 1981, xx).

Through the years since Mew's death in 1928, there has been continual interest in her poetry. Three dissertations and a full-length biography, republished in 1988, have been written about Mew and her work. Yet, her standing is still unclear. Even her admirers describe her work in contradictory terms. Leithauser says her poems tend to be "unspectacular," and "a good deal of what she did manage to produce deserves the neglect it has received (Fitzgerald 1988, 1)." Still, he finds her "ear adventurous" and her short poems "magnificent" (Fitzgerald 1988, 4). That she wrote only sixty-eight poems tends to make critics consider the strong-

est poems as quirks of personality rather than as parts of a developed poetic sense.

Furthermore, a preoccupation with the events in Mew's life, termed a "mystery" (Warner 1981, xiii), often have stood in the way of a clear consideration of her poems as examples of the craft of poetry. Critics have been caught up in demonstrating how the poems reveal (or do not reveal) Mew's sexual preference, in how the poems relate to actual life incidences or lend credence to feminist literary theory.

Do the poems work and if so how? These simple questions have not yet been answered. The following essay presents issues considered frequently by critics of Mew's poetry and her biographers. Where appropriate, the limitations of particular critical approaches are mentioned and suggestions for further study are noted.

WORKS CITED IN THE INTRODUCTION

Drabble, Margaret. 1985. Oxford companion to English literature. 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fitzgerald, Penelope. 1988. Charlotte Mew and her friends: With a selection of her poems. Foreword by Brad Leithauser. Radcliffe Biography Series. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.

Preminger, Alex. 1974. Princeton encyclopedia of poetry and poetics. Enlarged ed. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Warner, Val, ed. 1981. Introduction to Collected poems and prose, by Charlotte Mew. London: Carcanet Press in association with Virago Press.

APPRAISALS OF CHARLOTTE MEW'S POETRY: AN EVALUATION

As a whole the appraisals of Mew's poetry are disappointing. Most accomplish little more than announcing the publication of The Farmer's Bride, 1916, enlarged in 1921 and published simultaneously in the United States as Saturday Market; The Rambling Sailor, 1929; and The Collected Poems and Prose published in 1951. The articles restrict themselves to descriptions of the poems' plots, settings, characters and themes. The critics accept prior evaluations of Mew's work, often considering the same points. For this reason, Harold Monro's 1920 article takes on exaggerated importance. It does not critique Mew's poetry in-depth, but it is quoted repeatedly in other criticisms up to the present. Monro is the first to point to Mew's economy of language, use of ordinary diction and persona, and her creation of meaning by associating disparate images. These same characteristics are noted in later articles without ever being explained more fully or placed in a historical literary context. It is as if the writers assume the reader knows what is meant by such descriptive phrases as recorded above, the traditions from which they spring, and most importantly that we all agree on the effects these characteristics have on the reader.

However, these articles for the most part are not meant to be scholarly. They are published in newspapers, popular journals, and literary supplements. Their purpose is to entice the reading public to read Mew's poems. Their writers do not really want to explore poetic technique. To these critics, Mew's poems are sincere, passionate, beautiful, emotionally and intellectually restrained, conversational, and they have a glow of sentiment and personal flavor. One poem is even described as having a red, raw look. Perhaps to this end their contradictory terminology is intended to be evocative, but it is not informative.

Recent critical effort is directed toward more narrow, in-depth studies, in particular attempting to probe Mew's religious and philosophic intent. The historical context of her work began to be considered in 1968. The questions of variable diction and the obscurity of the poems cease to be issues by the 1960s, perhaps because of a more general acceptance of juxtaposition as a way of creating meaning. Throughout, technique is given the least consideration. Mew's lack of a habitual approach to rhyme, rhythm, or diction causes most critics to observe technical elements in a few poems but to make no attempt to show how technical elements contribute to the poems' meanings.

Mew's poems raise questions about gender identity. In fact, gender is an issue throughout the criticisms, either

in passing remarks, as the basis for approaching the poems or as the focus of study. Gender as identity, as philosophy, as restriction, as choice, is problematic in Mew's personal life, in the way critics assess her as a writer, and as an issue with which her characters struggle.

The following sections synthesize the salient critical comments under the topics of historical context, language, obscurity, biography, distancing, religion and philosophy, technique, and male/female issues. The source of each idea is noted by the author's name and the year the source was published. Full citations are in the chronological bibliography. If no source is noted, the idea is my own.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The historical context of Mew's poetry begins to be considered in the mid-twentieth century. The critics cannot decide if Mew is forward or backward looking. Hugh Haughton (1984) thinks her poetry is comparable to that of Thomas Hardy and Robert Frost because of her use of vernacular speech and psychological realism. Valerie Shaw (1982) thinks the lyrical style, atmospheric word-pictures and free association are Victorian.

Mew has often been classed with the Georgian poets. Jimmy Bishop (1968) reviews the criticism of the era. He neatly divides the Georgians from Neo-Georgians and explains how the latter have kept the former from being appreciated.

For Bishop, Mew does not belong to either group, but her poetry gains stature when compared with her contemporaries.

Penelope Fitzgerald's biography of Mew (1988) also provides a valuable literary context. She presents a brief history of each journal in which Mew published and its milieu.

LANGUAGE

Mew intersperses her poems with French, sometimes single words in the middle of an English sentence, sometimes whole sentences. The technical effect of this has not been explored, though Mew clearly works the French words into the rhyme scheme.

Both Henry Nevinson (1916) and Marguerite Wilkinson (1921) assume the occasional use of French signifies an influence from French poetry on Mew's choice of rhythm and images. But neither Nevinson or Wilkinson support their suggestions with concrete evidence.

The occurrence of French in the poems seems an interruption, even though it fits in the rhyme pattern. One reviewer notes its detrimental effect on the poems' sincerity, passion, and the reader's ability to comprehend the situation (M., 1954). Eileen Thompson (1922) finds the artificiality of the French causes a distancing effect. She suspects the effect is purposeful, as the poems depict France as seen by an outsider.

Many more reviewers choose to discuss instances of English dialect in the poems, even though the effects of both French and English dialect and their problems are similar. Both are "foreign" languages to the reader and both distance the reader from the lives of the characters and distance the emotion from the writer. Both slow the reader's comprehension of events and images, and slow the trajectory of the emotion. Both make it clear that the reader is a witness from a different world than the poem's isolated world. Yet, throughout the criticism these two uses of language are treated as separate issues.

In fact, the less frequent use of dialect in the poems is given more attention, chiefly as a way of associating Mew with other poets who use dialect, particularly Thomas Hardy. The tradition that Mew is poetically connected with Hardy commences with Frank Swinnerton in 1934. Mew is frequently compared with Hardy, generally through casual similarities. Many poets may use dialect but to different effect; their poetry may not be alike at all. Mew's connection with Hardy is discussed further below.

Edgell Rickword (1921) condemns Mew's poetry in part because of the dialect. According to Rickword, the pleasing effect of dialect is diminished by the sudden changes in the poems to a sophisticated and conventional syntax and diction. The reader loses confidence in the voice of the poem.

Shelley Crisp (1987) suggests the opposite. The use of a common idiom is an attempt to gain veracity for the speaker.

OBSCURITY

There are two kinds of obscurity at work in Mew's poems. One kind is hinted at by Rickword (1921) when he writes that the poems begin well but then waver and become argumentative with some undefined "you." The question of who speaks is fundamental to Mew's poetry. It is unclear at times if poems are monologues between opposing parts of the self, or dialogues between two people. The switches between languages or dialects also contribute to a schism within the self and between the self and the world with which it attempts to communicate. Gender of the speaker is often in question. As mentioned previously gender uncertainty is a central issue; it is discussed below.

The obscurity of events, what is actually happening in the situations of the poems, is found to be both positive and negative. It is frequently mentioned by critics until the mid-1950s.

Mew's poems are labeled obscure as early as 1916 when an anonymous reviewer for Englishwoman concludes that Mew has not yet found an appropriate method of expressing herself. On the other hand, William Braithwaite (1921) experiences a "thrilling confusion of wonder" instead.

Edith Sitwell (1929) is ambivalent. In one article she writes that the obscurity could have been avoided as it

comes from leaving out events or from digressing into areas that have nothing to do with the theme of the poems. Later that year, however, she amends her comments, writing that the obscurity of event does not obscure the emotion; that the reader comprehends the feeling and ultimate meaning of the poems.

John Gould Fletcher (1922) is even more positive. He compares Mew's poems to Japanese or Chinese poetry which require the reader to make imaginative leaps within the poem to supply connections and complete the meaning. Virginia Moore (1934) agrees that the images are emotionally, if not factually, related. Hilary Corke (1954) speaks of this juxtapositioning of images as luring the reader into making poetic links.

Why obscurity of events is not considered in later studies is unclear. Perhaps developments in poetic style in the latter part of the twentieth-century make meaning through juxtaposition and poetic leaps commonplace. Another possibility is that contemporary readers accept that clarity of emotion rather than clarity of event is the point of Mew's poems and is enough.

BIOGRAPHY

The obscurity of situation in Mew's poems leads critics to varying conclusions. The gender of the speaker is not always clear, nor the speaker's place in society and relationship with the person addressed in the poem. Facts

about Mew's personal life also have been scarce, even to her friends. What little there is was finally brought together in a 1984 biography. In the meantime, the poems have been used also as a crutch to support biographical suppositions, much to the detriment of productive criticism.

Alida Monro's 1929 introduction to The Rambling Sailor initiates the linking of poetry and biography. Monro says Mew's tribulations and poverty are responsible for her preoccupation with death and both physical and spiritual disaster. In Alida Monro's 1953 memoir she stresses that Mew is a personality at war with herself and that the poems reflect the difficulties of conducting a socially appropriate life in the midst of great emotion. Though Monro's comments generalize about Mew, they are in fact circumscribed. Monro knew Mew for only the last thirteen years of Mew's life, after most of her poems were written.

Connections between Mew's life and her poems are gestured at by many writers between 1929 and the present. Both Jimmy Bishop (1968) and Michael Holroyd (1969) suggest an appreciation of Mew's poems is hindered by the lack of biographical detail. In particular, Mary Davidow (1960, 1978) insists that a biographical background is necessary to understand the poems. Why that should be so is unclear. Perhaps it is tied up with a need to affix the poems to plausible outside events, since events in the poems are uncertain. Davidow uses poems to link Thomas Hardy in a

romantic relationship with Mew. The conjecture is based on similarities among images used in each writer's works.

Hugh Haughton (1984) believes Penelope Fitzgerald's biography of Mew explains the unhappiness inherent in Mew's poems and her affinity for insane and fallen women. Actually, Fitzgerald's biography (1988) does not make such overt connections. She does not claim the poems were written at the time particular events happened or that they depict actual events. Instead Fitzgerald connects the emotional content of the poems with the actual occurrences.

DISTANCING

Mew's use of variable language, her obscurity of persona and event, her shrouded personal life contribute, through various poetic elements, to a feeling that the poem is isolated from the world. Some critics see this isolation as a personal reflection of Mew. Harold Monro (1928) wonders at Mew's power of self-discipline in preventing fragments of her personality from appearing in her poems.

Angela Leighton (1982) refers to Mew as a spectator, one who watches rather than makes things happen. Mew's characters find themselves experiencing conflicting feelings about events because of societal or religious mores. In this sense they are imposed upon by a bigger power than themselves. They speak in a protective, detached tone, yet the form of the poems belies detachment. Rhythm falters and

long lines break the limits of established meter. The struggle is borne out through content, character and form.

Thomas Moult (1924) calls Mew an impersonal observer, though he clarifies that her approach is obviously an artistic choice. Yet Brad Leithauser (1987) makes a direct connection between the physical and spiritual distance in poems and Mew's life circumstances. John Freeman (1929) describes Mew's poetic voice as one of telling secrets. Yet he does not believe there is a chance she will reveal herself because some special knowledge is necessary for the reader to be aware of the exposure. This harks back to the idea that missing biographical detail is necessary to comprehend the poems. The idea of secrets comes up again in Lorna Keeling Collard (193Ø) who likens the voice of the poems to a whisper carrying unutterable thoughts.

Jane Augustine (1988) mentions a recurring gesture, the intense look, that occurs between characters. The ending of "Ken" is an example where a look connects two participants in an emotional moment. Augustine does not elaborate on the idea, but some additional points are clear. The look, in effect, bridges distance, while it emphasizes distance. The look has an intensity, a physicality about it yet requires no touch. It is a purely spiritual connection apprehended through the body. Looking, seeing, watching, occur throughout Mew's poems. Even non-human things watch. The significance of this warrants exploration.

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Even though much is made of the compositor who refused to set the type for "Madeleine in Church" because he thought it blasphemous, little is written initially about the religious aspects of Mew's work. Catholicism is generally the focal point because of the images of Christ, the cross, nuns and sinners. But her poems are described by Ralph Lawrence (1954) as vacillating among Christian, pantheistic, and pagan ideas. According to Alida Monro (1929) Mew did not believe in a better world beyond this one. Yet, an element of hope or yearning is certainly present. Eileen Thompson (1922) describes this longing with a religious analogy of her own, calling the poems a landscape of the soul. Thompson posits Mew's tone of bitterness and protest stems from a fundamental religious belief that is frustrated by the world's impenetrable facade. There is present in Thompson's analogy the feeling of isolation. The intense look mentioned above as the embodiment of a spiritual or emotional moment apprehended through the body perhaps most perfectly expresses the quest inherent in Mew's poems.

Duality is mentioned frequently; an attraction yet rejection of Christ and religion. Mew hopes to experience permanence through religion but refuses to give up the material world. This struggle between two desires is a central issue of contemporary criticism's approach to Mew's poetry.

Hoaxie Fairchild (1962) sees Mew's poems as the product of a combined frustration: sexual and religious. Michael Holroyd (1969) comprehends Mew's attempts to merge the two desires through a physical spirituality. An example is the motif of hair and washing Christ's feet with it. Michael Schmidt (1979) comes to the same conclusion through the example of Mary Magdalene's redemption through the physical being of Christ which occurs in many of Mew's poems.

Mew's personas continue to search for redemption in this world, not the next. Many of her characters on this quest compare themselves with Magdalene and look for a male redeemer. Linda Mizejewski (1984) explains the Victorian roots of the fallen woman motif. She also describes ways Mew subverts the biblical story of Magadalene in such poems as "Madeleine in Church" and "She Was a Sinner" to challenge literary tradition, social mores, and religious restrictions.

Christianity attempts to focus its believer's attention on the next world. The material earth is disregarded, or negated, because of its temporal nature. Jimmy Bishop's 1968 thesis calls this negating power the Void. As he sees it, in Mew's poems effort is directed at penetrating or transcending the Void. The poems he discusses try through love, through unity with Christ, through nature, and through embracing death to achieve fulfillment within or beyond the Void.

In Mew's poetry as well as her prose there are recurring types of characters, all of whom experience a negated life and wait for a different one. These are brides, spinsters, mothers, nuns and prostitutes. Val Warner's 1975 article describes the types of situations in which these characters find themselves but does not explore more deeply. Much more could be done with this idea. For instance, it may be of significance that the mother and the spinster, the nun and the prostitute are the obverse of each other. The bride (the bride of man, the bride of Christ) exists as a channel. She is the transitory state embodying hope, yet she is a devastating power to herself or others.

TECHNIQUE

Poetic technique is not discussed much in the early criticisms. If the reviews are positive, they call the poems effective, passionate, beautiful. The negative remarks are hardly less specific, mainly noting that the forms of the poems lack control. The reviews do not address how the poems work. In an anonymous review from 1916, the writer admits the poems have pretty musical effects but attributes them to random experiment. In other words, Mew cannot know what she is doing or cannot mean to be doing it, an attitude reiterated in another anonymous review from 1929.

But in 1954 Hilary Corke expresses the belief that Mew's control of form is astonishing. Alida Monro's 1953

memoir excerpts several letters from Mew which evince a technical comprehension and control of form with the acknowledged aim of creating a particular emotional shape.

Many reviewers point to Mew's use of rhythm and rhyme to control emotion. Probably the best written review is Brad Leithauser's 1987 article. Its specificity and clarity are superior to the longer explications in the three theses. Shelley Crisp (1987) explains that Mew uses rhyme to move the reader from one rhythm to the next. She points to poetic devices used by other modernists such as fragmented thought, synecdoche and dissociated references and symbols.

The techniques above are used by every poet to some degree. Mew, however, actually would convert prose into poetry. Mary Davidow (1978) proposes Mew transmuted prose into poetry. Davidow compares one of Mew's essay to her later poem, "The Little Portress," pointing out similar passages. She also attempts to show how Mew might have transmuted parts of Hardy's Jude the Obscure into several poems, but this is much less convincing.

Michael Schmidt (1979) notes conversation is secondary to the way things are said in Mew's prose. The gesture, symbol and the sequence of images are more important in conveying meaning. He finds this same characteristic in Mew's poetry. The organization of the images drives the form of the poems.

Finally, Val Warner (1981) makes a salient point about creative development between the prose and the poetry. Mew wrote almost all her prose before turning to poetry. In the prose the polarities of passion and negation result from situations. In the poetry these same polarities result from character.

MALE/FEMALE ISSUES

A surprising number of reviews look at Mew poems as women's poetry and as such apply a different criteria in appraising it. Often the accolades to her poems are circumscribed by the label "woman poet."

According to some reviews, there are certain characteristics of women's poetry and the woman poet. Marguerite Wilkinson (1921) attributes the emotional power of Mew's poems to a female facility to make other people's emotions her own, adding sympathy and intuitive understanding to them. An anonymous 1957 review adds the clearly female characteristics of compassion and tenderness to Mew's poems.

An anonymous review published in 1953 says the best effects generated by Mew's poems, intensity and simplicity, are feminine characteristics. Women who are good poets keep their emotions controlled and suppress any wish to be original or striking. In fact, according to this review, a few of Mew's poems are spoiled by an ambitious, professional element and by imagining herself dramatically as other people in other situations.

John Gould Fletcher (1922) points out that women have a restricted range of experience, which limits the number of different images they have available for their poetry. Each image, therefore, must have multiple meanings, which makes comprehension more difficult. What Fletcher fails to mention is that images always have multiple meanings; it is context, tone, a myriad of other factors which contribute to the one meaning the poet intends the poem to produce.

An anonymous 1929 review begins by saying that women are not often great poets but have one or two unspecified qualifications. It continues, calling Mew ladylike but intense. In a similar mistaken attempt to place Mew in the category of "poetess," Thomas Moult (1924) reviews Mew's poems along with those by three other women poets; two of whom write about birds and the hearthside, and one, classical settings. Yet, Moult says they all find their material in daily life. They eschew shock-value, following the notion that artistic expression does not require repression nor excess.

There is, however, an underlying disregard for women poets' technical abilities. Conrad Aiken (1922) ostensibly reviews eight books of poems, but dismisses the four written by women, including Mew, with one comment: the women poets are overshadowed by more gifted writers who happen to be men. In another instance, Wilfrid Blunt wrote a letter in 1918 (published in Meynell 1940) about "The Farmer's Bride."

He expresses the opinion that the writings of a woman using a male persona lack sincerity. There is, in Mew's willingness to take on the male persona and in the uncertainty of the gender of some speakers, a kind of ambivalence. Henry Nevinson (1916) finds the farmer in "The Farmer's Bride" to seem so sympathic and sensitive that Nevinson cannot understand why his bride would run from him. Yet, the poem is as sympathetic to the female character as to the male character. The inexplicableness of the bride's behavior is part of the poem's truthfulness.

If it cannot be proven that women are less technically capable, then they are dismissed because they are expressing female emotions, ideas and belief. T. E. Lawrence writes in a 1924 letter (published in Meynell 194Ø) that Mew's intensity of feeling is a weakness and her over-wrought nerves interfere with her powers of expression. Mew herself lashes out at the male dismissal of women and their feelings as nothing more than nerves in her poem "Monsieur Qui Passe (Quai Voltaire)."

Without judging one type to be superior to the other, Patric Dickinson (1948) expresses a belief in a gender-based difference in creativity. Male creativity is self-centered and outward looking. Female creativity is inward, secret and self-effacing.

By the 198Ø's some reviewers find Mew's work stands outside the conventional poetry written by poetesses of her

time. Vicki Feaver (1981) contradicts the previous assumption that since Mew is a woman and a poet that she writes women's poetry and that women's poetry has certain connotations. Comparing Mew and Emily Bronte, Feaver finds a similarity in resistance: both refused, in their writing, to resort to the "female expedient of amiability" (p. 1413).

Mew's sexuality is problematic to many critics and biographers. Sexual frustration is seen as a topic in and the impetus for her writing. Gill Hanscombe (1985) believes an acceptance of Mew's lesbianism is essential. Accepting lesbianism as the basis of Mew's reality allows it to be integrated into an assessment of her works. Though Penelope Fitzgerald takes Mew's lesbianism as a fact in her 1984 biography, Linda Wagner-Martin (1989) objected to the way Mew's unexpressed lesbianism is used to account for most of Mew's actions. Wagner-Martin makes a convincing argument that Mew's recurring depression could as easily cause the same erratic behavior. Another conflict, choosing art over family responsibility, is not stressed by Fitzgerald, yet has painful consequences.

Shelley Crisp's 1987 disseration, takes as its premise feminist literary theory. Mew, Crisp says, is fated to literary oblivion because of the historical and contemporary treatment of women writers. Women in Mew's writings explore their sexuality but are punished by finding their likeness in a remonstrating harlot.

CONCLUSION

Charlotte Mew's poetry offers many areas for further study. At a basic but crucial level the question, are the poems still effective, remains to be answered. Each poem must be seen as a whole to evaluate how successful it is technically. Throughout the criticisms the poems are broken apart and pieces or lines are made to stand for Mew's whole poetic or personal philosophy. Poems are not dealt with as wholes. Particularly, no one has yet explored the poems' intent, effect, reverberation, or the relationships between poems, or the effect of the reader's world interacting with Mew's.

Usually, the same poems are quoted over and over to exemplify whatever point the critic wishes to make. This handful of poems is by no means all of Mew's good poems. A useful study could use the criticism to find how often the same poem is cited, and how that probably narrows the scope of understanding her work.

Mew's poems are often referred to as dialogues, with the implication that the speaker addresses another person or as monologues with the implication that the speaker addresses the reader or the self. However, it is likely that in Mew's poems the speaker speaks to parts of the self, or when the poems seem to be dialogue that two parts of the self are talking. The poems in this sense are divided within and isolated without; they are totally interior.

Finally, Jane Augustine (1988) briefly mentions the intense look as the signifier of an emotional moment, as the bonding of spiritual and physical experience. This has several aspects to explore. In "The Fete" there are witnessing trees; in the prose Sunday is the day of eyes. The sense of scrutiny and judgment occurs throughout Mew's poems. The eyes take us in, appraise, and either keep or reject us. Somehow, for Mew, even the earth either accepts or rejects us.

Charlotte Mew's poetry has received much attention for as few poems as there are. But for some reason critics usually treat it as a delightful (or incompetent) oddity that is occasionally useful to support a literary theory. It is time to start with the poems and to stick with the poems as a way of understanding and appreciating them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1916

D., H. "The Farmer's Bride." Egoist 3, no. 9 (September 1916): 135.

A wandering tribute to Mew's dramatic lyrics. Browning, Frost, and Ford Madox Ford are mentioned as fellow-followers of this tradition. A quotation from "Madeleine in Church" fills almost half the review. The lines are described as having "poignancy" and "personal flavour."

Doolittle, Hilda. See D., H. 1916.

H. D. See D., H. 1916.

Nevinson, Henry Wood. "The Lyric." Nation, 8 July 1916, 442, 444.

Not verified. Attributed to Nevinson in Warner (1975) page 439, and in Davidow (1960). Hall (1982) volume 8, page 294 quotes one paragraph but does not cite an author. The paragraph emphasizes an echo of French language and French spirit in Mew's poetry. Suggests Mew's casting of emotion in concrete forms is also a result of French influence. Echoes of the 1890s are present as well. The farmer in "The Farmer's Bride" seems problematic as he appears "so sympathetic and sensitive that a mere man can hardly imagine why the most sensitive woman should run out into the night to avoid him" (p. 444).

Review of The Farmer's Bride, by Charlotte Mew. In Athenaeum, no. 4606 (June 1916): 284.

Mew's poems are judged irregular and obscure in five straightforward sentences. "Pretty musical effects" in the poems are attributed to "random experiment."

Review of The Farmer's Bride, by Charlotte Mew. In Englishwoman, no. 92 (August 1916): 184-185.

Cites several poems as examples of effective irregular rhythm, and expressions of anger and

delirium. Yet, the poems are "unable to rise into the serene region beyond anger and despair" (p. 184). The reader, at times, can only half-understand the poem, forcing the conclusion that Mew has not yet found an appropriate mode of expression.

Review of The Farmer's Bride, by Charlotte Mew. Times Literary Supplement (London), 21 September 1916, 455.

Describes the poems as unintelligible, achieving "all the grotesque inconsequence of a dream." Acknowledges a thread of underlying meaning generated by the mind's inner drama. Quotes from "The Fete," "The Forest Road," and "Madeleine in Church" to exemplify Mew's successful use of simile and sensuous or satiric expressions.

1920

Klementaski, Alida. See Monro, Alida. 1920.

[Monro, Alida]. "A Bibliography of Modern Poetry: With Notes on Some Contemporary Poets." Chapbook 2, no. 12 (June 1920): 30.

A one paragraph acclamation. Mew's economy of words, "directness of expression, force of imagery and keen feeling for drama" coupled with her pyschological approach make her one of the twentieth century's best poets. Attributed to Monro by Fitzgerald in her 1988 biography.

Monro, Harold. "Poets and Poetasters of Our Time." Chap. in Some Contemporary Poets (1920). London: Leonard Parsons, 1920.

A portion of the chapter, pages 75-82, outlines Mew's poetic strengths and gives examples. Monro favorably compares Mew's economy of diction with Elizabeth Barrett Browning's verbose poems. Mew's use of personalities to channel emotions rather than the self, her ordinary diction, the impression of rambling that belies the necessity of each detail to the whole, are all additional strengths. Although death figures implicitly or explicitly in many Mew poems, grief is more truly the focus.

Republished London: Simpkin Marshall, 1928.

Braithwaite, William Stanley. "A Rising Young English Poet." Boston Evening Transcript, 18 May 1921, 4.

Claiming that Saturday Market, the American version of The Farmer's Bride, is "precious with the freight of a promise that is going to make the arrival of a genius," Braithwaite uses the metaphor of waves to comment on Mew's loose, flexible form. He speaks positively of a "thrilling confusion of wonder" that results from her dramatic situations which wander between dream and reality. Even so, the poems constitute a "tight intellectual web" full of "beautiful and impressive imagery."

Chesson, W. H. "Death In Poetry." Bookman 60 (July 1921): 180-181.

Briefly reviews six books of poems sharing death as a principle topic. Mew's 1921 edition of The Farmer's Bride earns a single paragraph of praise. The reviewer declares Mew a poet of "dexterity, subtlety and power."

Gould, Gerald. See Monro, Harold. 1921.

Monro, Harold. "The Golden Book." Bookman 61 (December 1921): 137-141. Illus.

Proposes an imaginary "Golden Book of English Poetry" to be updated every ten years. Eight persons "of learning" (p. 137) contributed selections of poets and poems, along with some comments.

Lady Margaret Sackville chose Mew because her "poems possess passion, restraint and originality" (p. 138). Gerald Gould contributed a list of forty names, including Mew's. His single comment on Mew insists she is "worthy of a place in almost any anthology" (p. 141).

Review of The Farmer's Bride, by Charlotte Mew. In Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 26 May 1921.

Unverified. No original page cited. Quoted on page 261 of Davidow (1960): The poems have "a forceful phrasing which rings absolutely sincere, stirring one knows not what divine sense of tears, voicing one knows not what insistent 'obstinate questionings of sense and outward things'."

Review of The Farmer's Bride, by Charlotte Mew. In Southport Guardian, 25 May 1921.

Unverified. No original page cited. Quoted on page 260-261 of Davidow (1960): Mew is "one of the best of contemporary women poets, individual in style and in outlook, skilled in metrical forms, and fresh in expression."

Review of Saturday Market, by Charlotte Mew. In Nation, 27 July 1921, 104.

Critics who lauded Mew's work are contradicted in this single paragraph which finds her poems narrow and not quite "powerful" enough to be successful. Though passionate, condensed and intense, Mew's poems seem "twitching with tantrums of the imagination and calling on him [the reader] to admire."

[Rickword, Edgell]. "New Poetry." New Statesman (London), 2 April 1921, 759-760.

Reviews four books of poems, including Mew's The Farmer's Bride. Since literary movements take energy from a renovation of poetic diction, the books are examined through an analysis of their styles. In three paragraphs, Mew's poems are condemned because of an indirect story line and the use of dialect. The effect of the dialect, while pleasing, is diminished by the switch to a sophisticated syntax within the same poem. Ultimately, the reader loses confidence. To the reviewer, "one feels that one has come to a good poem, then it wavers, becomes argumentative, or conventional with some undefined 'you,' and loses itself finally in the morasses of the confessional" (p. 759).

An edited version of this essay was reprinted in 1974 in Essays & Opinions 1921-1931. The third paragraph on Mew in the original essay is deleted. In it he had stated the emotional range of the poems leads the reader "into all kinds of unexplained places, whence one emerges very confused and a little tired" (p. 760).

Sackville, Lady Margaret. See Monro, Harold. 1921.

Sitwell, Edith. Review of The Farmer's Bride, by Charlotte Mew. In Daily Herald, 4 April 1921.

Unverified. No original page cited. Quoted on page 260 of Davidow (1960) as follows:

The book was hailed with enthusiasm by all poets, who with one accord acclaimed it as the work of a great poet. It came, indeed, with the shock of a discovery; for here was none of the self-consciousness or the self-protective weakness to which we had become accustomed in emotional poems by women. Miss Mew was unconscious of her audience; she was alone with her emotion, and the poetry it evoked ....

Untermeyer, Louis. "The Poems of Charlotte Mew." Literary Review New York Evening Post, 23 July 1921, sec. 3, 2.

Observes similarities (the intellect controlling the sense, a use of concentrated natural speech, a psychological approach) and differences between Mew and poet Anna Wickham. Untermeyer also finds a suggestion of D. H. Lawrence's writings in Mew's persona Madeleine and in her loose flexible forms. He comments that her very long lines are sustained by melodic and intellectual strength.

About one-quarter of the article follows Harold Monro's 1920 comments on Mew's directness of voice and the reader's reactions to the poems "The Changeling" and "The Quiet House." Reprints of Mew's poems constitute almost half the article.

Wilkinson, Marguerite. "Lyrics That Are Not for Polyanna." New York Times Book Review and Magazine, 19 June 1921, 10.

The emotional truths of Mew's poems are attributed to a feminine approach. Mew took "sorrow and doubt and wonder from the lips of other human beings into her own heart and made them her own ... with her sympathy, her intuitive understanding added to them." Intense vitality and intellectual accuracy are hallmarks of her poems. Includes descriptions of settings, suggests a French influence in her rhythms and notes how the rhythm contributes to the poems' emotional impact. Mew is "a person in literature." As such her poems ask the reader to meet them part way, as they would a person. Reprints Mew's "I Have Been Through the Gates."

[Williams-Ellis, A.]. "Miss Charlotte Mew's Poems." Spectator (London), 26 March 1921, 403-404.

The unreality of death is the recurring theme in The Farmer's Bride. Mew's economy of language is responsible for her powerful emotional effects. Yet it leads her, at times, to prosaic expressions. After briefly comparing Mew to advantage with George Crabbe

and Alexander Pope, the reviewer concludes Mew's "work shows a wonderful degree of craftsmanship; there is not a word out of place or weak" (p. 403).

Expanded by introductory and concluding paragraphs in Williams-Ellis's 1922 An Anatomy of Poetry. Mew is mentioned in two other places in the book. Williams-Ellis observes that the desire to state facts in a detached manner leads to inhumaness. "Miss Charlotte Mew, for instance, has great qualities of restraint and intellectual grasp, but her work would be very much improved if she could be a little less just and indifferent" (p. 17). Harold Monro's 1920 Some Contemporary Poets (1920) is evaluated as a bitter attack on poetry. Williams-Ellis comments that "The reader closes the book with the impression that Miss Charlotte Mew is the only modern poet worth reading ..." (p. 193).

1922

Aiken, Conrad. "The New Elizabethans." Yale Review, n.s. 11 (April 1922): 632-636.

Reviewing four books by male poets and four books by female poets, Aiken quickly dispatches the women stating, "they are in company that overshadows them ..., among singers more gifted than they ..." (p. 633). Mew is mentioned specifically in two sentences: "we shall leave ourselves little room for sufficient praise of Miss Charlotte Mew, an English poetess of fine individuality, whose 'Madeleine in Church' is one of the most moving of modern poems ..." (p. 633). Later he states that Mew will leave "a poem or two for the anthologist of the future" (p. 634).

Fletcher, John Gould. "The Poetry of Charlotte Mew." New York Freeman, 15 March 1922, 20-21.

Mew shares some similarities with Emily Dickinson. Both are driven by renunciation, are conscious of a life beyond this one, use simplicity of statement and have a less than masterful control of form.

The meaning of Mew's poems is behind the words. The reader must apply his/her own intellect to fully comprehend. This is similar to Japanese and Chinese poetry "where something has to be supplied to complete the meaning of the words themselves" (p. 20).

Fletcher briefly discusses how range of experience differs between the poetry of men and women. The woman's more limited range restricts the number of objects available to a poem. "The fewer objects you have to fasten your feelings upon, the more you must take each one of them to imply ..." (p. 21), making

comprehension more difficult. Yet he believes with more concentration Mew could be a great poet.

Strobel, Marion. "Charlotte Mew." Poetry 20 (June 1922): 152-155.

Approximately half the article consists of "The Farmer's Bride" and "Sea Love." Strobel approves of the stories in the poems and of Mew's use of characters. However, the longer poems risk melodrama, verboseness, and discordant lines.

Thompson, Eileen B. "The Poems of Charlotte Mew." Canadian Bookman 4 (January 1922): 48-49.

The poems are not personal, but are as specific and individual as the characters. The world is visioned through the eyes of different characters in differing situations. "The appeal of the scenes is swift and emotional, sharpened by intellectual restraint" (p. 48). What is described by Mew is a landscape of the soul; hence, the poems' quest for a way behind the world's facade. Her tone of bitterness and protest stems from a fundamental religious belief that is frustrated by the world.

Note that "much of the verse is punctured with French phrases, not always to its betterment, for although they heighten the local tang they make it slightly artificial, perhaps purposely so since her France is seen from the outside" (p. 48). Mentions Monro's 1920 comments.

Williams-Ellis, A. "Charlotte Mew." In An Anatomy of Poetry. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1922. See Williams-Ellis, A. 1921.

1923

Gould, Gerald. "The New Poetry." Bookman 64 (August 1923): 217-219. Illus.

A discussion of what is new in contemporary poetry that ranges through R. S. Flint, H. D., the Sitwells, Siegfried Sassoon and Harold Monro to conclude with a few sentences on Mew. She is "a poet new in her methods and her message, who enlarges our conception of the bounds of poetry and yet never writes as if hampered by a theory" (p. 219). In her work form is not separate from the substance.

1924

Moult, Thomas. "Four Women Poets." Bookman 65 (January 1924): 196-199. Illus.

Mew, Katherine Tynan, Sylvia Lynd and Lady Margaret Sackville are grouped as poets who find their material in the common things of daily life. They do not try to shock; rather they embody the notion that artistic revelation does not require either repression or excess. In the few paragraphs on Mew, Moult notes her "economy of language never gives the least sense of spareness" (p. 198). Though Mew as poet is the impersonal observer, the impersonality is merely "the artist's advantageous preference for one medium rather than another" (p. 198). Mew's subjective mood imparts a potent intensity. Mentions Monro's 1920 comments.

1925

Untermeyer, Louis. See Untermeyer, Louis, 1930.

1926

Robertson, David A. "Contemporary English Poets: Charlotte Mew." English Journal 15 (May 1926): 344-347.

Mew's "Ken" printed on three pages. The final page generalizes previous critics' comments on restraint, renunciation, dialect, and urges the reader to sample Mew's poems.

1927

Newbolt, Henry. "Charlotte Mew." In New Paths On Helicon. London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, [1927].

An anthology of poetry accompanied by commentary. Mew's selections, pages 181-191, are "Beside the Bed," "The Changeling," "Exspecto Resurrectionem," "I Have Been Through the Gates," and excerpts from "Madeleine in Church." Commenting on Mew's poems on pages 397-398, the reviewer mostly confines himself to naming the emotions he believes permeate or motivate the poems: grief, pity, and sorrow. Mew's poems have "the glow of sentiment," and "a natural tenderness" (p. 397).

1928

C., S. C. See Cockerell, S. C. 1928.

C[ockerell], S[ydney] C[arlyle]. "Miss Charlotte Mew: A Poet of Rare Quality." Times (London), 29 March 1928, 21.

Obituary, by a friend of Mew's later years, reporting some facts of her life. Republished in Friends of a Lifetime, edited by Viola Meynell (194Ø).

Monro, Harold. "Charlotte Mew." Bookman 74 (May 1928): 112-113. Illus.

Comments briefly on Mew's life. Quotes "Sea Love" and "The Sunlit House" as examples of Mew's power of compression and emotional restraint. He wonders at the self-discipline necessary to prevent herself from yielding a fragment of her personality in the poems (p. 113). The ending of "The Pedlar" is an example of recovering her self-possession.

_____. "Poets and Poetasters of Our Time." Chap. in Some Contemporary Poets (192Ø). London: Simpkin Marshall, 1928. See Monro, Harold. 192Ø.

S. C. C. See Cockerell, Sydney Carlyle. 1928.

1929

A. K. See Monro, Alida. 1929.

Freeman, John. "Charlotte Mew." Bookman 76 (June 1929): 145-146. Illus.

About one-third of the article paraphrases Alida Monro's 1929 introduction. The value of Mew's poetry lies in its intimate relationship to the poet, its sincerity of expression. "Everything is uttered in the manner of telling secrets" (p. 145), but she is not revealed to everyone because "only those who are given an understanding will be aware of the exposure" (p. 145). No elaboration is made on this remark. Freeman does not believe Mew was in command of her craft, "that the sharpness and depth of her spirit are not matched by sharpness and weight of expression" (p. 146). In particular, verbal brillancy, forms and rhythm were not under control.

K., A. See Monro, Alida. 1929.

Klementaski, Alida. See Monro, Alida. 1929.

[Monro, Alida]. Introduction to The Rambling Sailor, by Charlotte Mew. [London]: Poetry Bookshop, 1929. Illus.

Brief (pp. 7-8) portrait of Mew's life. Mew did not hope for better things in another world. She felt a bond with the earth and "a knowledge of final peace in the heart of things" (p. 8).

Review of The Rambling Sailor, by Charlotte Mew. In Life & Letters 3 (July-December 1929): 398.

"Women have not often been great poets, but they often have had one or two special qualifications." So begins a one paragraph assessment that classifies Mew as "ladylike, intense, rather confined; with only here and there a spirited and lucky venture into the objective." In each poem there is "one vibration of sincere feeling, not very loud."

Sitwell, Edith. Review of The Farmer's Bride and The Rambling Sailor, by Charlotte Mew. In Criterion 9 (October 1929): 130-134.

According to Sitwell there is little to say about the poems, "except to pay tribute to the emotional integrity and to the fine and truthful power of expressing emotion" (p. 131). From personal experience Mew has made poems of universal application. Mew's poems as a whole are not formally interesting nor do they discover anything new in the world. In fact, they are occasionally flawed by an obscurity of event, but not of emotion; the reader comprehends the feeling and ultimate meaning, yet remains unsure of what transpired within the poem's reality.

_____. Review of The Farmer's Bride and The Rambling Sailor, by Charlotte Mew. In Time and Tide, 21 June 1929, 755-756.

Unverified. No original page number cited. Quoted on page 266 of Davidow (1960). The poems are sometimes obscure which

> could have been avoided, since it does not result from the impossibility of conveying a state of feeling, or from the difficulty of finding the expression in which to convey a new discovery. It results, rather, from an elliptical way of leaving out events, or certain explanations; and at moments, it results still more from planting in the poem certain events or side-remarks which have nothing to do with the theme. This occasional

obscurity, and the absence of physical beauty, are the only faults which it would be possible to find in these poems.

Wolfe, Humbert. Review of The Rambling Sailor, by Charlotte Mew. In Observer (London), 12 June 1929.

Unverified. No original page number cited. Cited in Davidow (1960), on page 265. Quoted in Severance (1983) as follows:

> She has no tricks or graces. She is completely mistress of her instrument, but she does not use it for any but the most austere purpose .... All that she wrote had its quality of depth and stillness. No English poet had less pretensions, and few as genuine a claim to be in touch with the source of poetry.

1930

Collard, Lorna Keeling. "Charlotte Mew." Contemporary Review 137 (April 1930): 501-508.

Two pages of biography followed by general statements of Mew's themes: life is duality (pleasure and pain commingled); nature is a conduit to peace; peace should be accompanied by passion. The poems are described as a "kind of strained whisper which bears unutterable thoughts" (p. 505) and are spontaneous expression rather than crafted. Mew shares with Alice Meynell and Emily Bronte economy of language and expressions of duality embodied in similar themes. Each uses "lists of words in which meaning is unfolded and [through which] a sense of climax [is] attained" (p. 506). Bronte's "Last Line," Meynell's "Christ in the Universe," and Mew's "The Fete" and "To a Child in Death" are examples.

Untermeyer, Louis, ed. "Charlotte Mew." In Modern British Poetry: A Critical Anthology. 3d rev. ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1930.

The four paragraphs of commentary on pages 346-353 consist mostly of biography drawn from Cockerell's 1928 obituary and Alida Monro's 1929 introduction to The Rambling Sailor. Untermeyer says Mew's poetry "is the distillation, the essence of emotion, rather than the stirring up of passions" (p. 347). He mentions favorably her dramatic monologues and projections, her flexible line and condensation of meaning. Pages 348-353 carry seven Mew poems.

Expanded from the 1925 second edition. Published in several later editions with corrections and slight additions to the commentary and changes to poems selected. Also published in a combined edition, Modern American Poetry, Modern British Poetry.

1932

Moore, Virginia. "Charlotte Mew." Yale Review, n.s. 22 (December 1932): 429-432. See Moore, Virginia. 1934.

1934

Moore, Virginia. "Charlotte Mew." Chap. in Distinguished Women Writers. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1934.

Pages 191-202 initially outline the few known facts of Mew's life. Subsequently Moore approaches the poems as sources for expanding the portrait of Mew. Eleven poems are quoted, mostly in part. Moore's comments tend to be utilitarian; their purpose is to justify quoting the bit of poetry that follows them. For example, she introduces a part of "In Nunhead Cemetary" by remarking that Mew "watches the digging and decorating of graves and experiences a bitter throe" (p. 195). However, she comments usefully on the long poems that the images are emotionally, if not factually, related (p. 194). The diverse elements take on meaning at their conjunctions rather than individually. She points out "separate ideas usually begin and end on the same line, they do not run over; yet the lines are extraordinarily flexible" (p. 195).

Expanded and more critical version of a tribute published in 1932 under the Letters and Comments section of the Yale Review.

Swinnerton, Frank. "Charlotte Mew." In The Georgian Scene: A Literary Panorama. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1934.

On pages 321-322 the first paragraph justifies Mew's inclusion in the volume by mentioning Hardy's appreciation of her work. The second paragraph describes Mew's poetry as personal and beautiful, though it lacks the calculating gesture which he values as a mark of quality. The plots of two poems are described and part of "The Forest Road" is quoted.

In the 1969 edition Swinnerton removes the final sentence of the 1934 edition: "Her use of language is admirable; its suppleness constantly enchants the ear; but what gives the poems perfection is the sincerity which finds fit words because the impulse to write, to tell, has been so intense" (p. 322).

Published several times: London: Heinemann, 1935; and as The Georgian Literary Scene: 1910-1935 by London: Hutchinson, 1950; New York: Farrar, Straus, 1950 and London: Radius Books/Hutchinson, 1969.

1935

Swinnerton, Frank. See Swinnerton, Frank. 1934.

1940

Blunt, Wilfrid Scawen. See Meynell, Viola. 1940.

Cockerell, Sydney Carlyle. See Meynell, Viola. 1940.

Hardy, Mrs. Thomas (Florence). See Meynell, Viola. 1940.

Lawrence, Thomas Edward. See Meynell, Viola. 1940.

Mew, Charlotte. See Meynell, Viola. 1940.

Meynell, Viola, ed. Friends of a Lifetime: Letters to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell. London: Jonathan Cape, 1940. Illus.

Includes seven edited letters, dated 1918-1927, from Mew to Cockerell on pages 316-323. Most are personal, but Mew comments, July 10, 1918, on the voice of the farmer in "The Farmer's Bride" and her belief that the way it is written accurately reflects her ideas. Her letter of July 29, 1923 responds to the application for a British Civil List Pension.

Reprints Cockerell's 1928 London Times obituary, annotated above.

Wilfrid Blunt's 1918 letter on pages 202-203 finds fault with some poems in The Farmer's Bride which leave the reader confused about what happens in them. Also, he believes a woman writing in a male persona lacks sincerity.

Mrs. Thomas Hardy mentions Mew in two 1918 letters on pages 299-300. She transmits Thomas Hardy's agreement with Blunt's comments of Mew's work. Includes Mrs. Hardy's impression of Mew.

T. E. Lawrence mentions Mew twice in 1924 on pages 361-362. On page 361 he writes:

> Miss Mew: too much emotion for her art, for her intellect, for her will. Such intensity of feeling is a sign of weakness. She is a real poet--but a little one, for the incoherency, the violence of over-wrought nerves does much harm to her powers of expression.

1942

Kunitz, Stanley J., and Howard Haycraft, eds. Twentieth Century Authors: A Biographical Dictionary of Modern Literature. Authors Series. New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1942. S.v. "Mew, Charlotte." Illus.

The first paragraph states biographical information; the second paragraph describes her literary career. To the reader it seems "her poems were wrung out of her, infrequently, when she could no longer contain them" (p. 952).

The final paragraph critiques her work through quotations from published criticisms. Those quoted are Harold Monro, John Freeman, both focusing on the secretiveness of Mew and her poems; Louis Untermeyer on her deceptive fragility; Lorna Keeling Collard finds Mew's power comes from spiritual value; Thomas Moult thinks her work is impersonal but intense. Mentions the narrowness of her range as a barrier to genius status.

The 1955 first supplement adds three works to the bibliography of Mew's work and criticism given in the 1942 volume.

1943

Monroe, Harriet, and Alice Corbin Henderson, eds. The New Poetry: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Verse in English. New ed. New York: Macmillan Co., 1943. S.v. "Charlotte Mew."

Brief critical entry on page 735 quotes John Gould Fletcher's review of Saturday Market from 1922, annotated above. Reprints Mew's "The Farmer's Bride" and "Beside the Bed" on pages 375-377.

1948

Dickinson, Patric. "A Note on Charlotte Mew." The Nineteenth Century and After 144 (July 1948): 42-47.

Consideration of Mew's qualities as a poet (p. 44) led Dickinson to consider the difference between male and female creativity. He uses an analogy of physical sex to explore this difference in the opening two pages of his article. "The male creator lies with a female creativeness and that immediate and momentary passion suffices him as a stimulus to creative works: but the female creator after her daimon has gone must wait in a secret and passionate apprehension; must wait, and

nothing may come; and if it come, still it is secret" (p. 43).

Women's creativity is inward, secret; the awareness of self is objective or self-effacing. Women's poetry "exists entirely within, yet without the poet ..." (p. 43). The male self awareness manifests itself as pride and pleasure in himself. Dickinson uses D. H. Lawrence and Edith Sitwell as examples of writers writing out of their opposing sexuality. The connection between these comments and Mew's work is not expounded, but perhaps can be drawn indirectly.

He characterizes her work as "ruthless, appalling, inexorable" (p. 44). Yet, he notes her compassion to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, such as "Ken" and the person in "The Quiet House." The poems are immediate. "There is no lapse of time, no change of feeling perceptible: the poem and the experience seem concurrent, the one creating the other" (p. 45). She employs a conversational rhythm which is accepted as a twentieth-century innovation and practice, but Mew was using it at a time when the contemporary poetry was still very nineteenth century (p. 46).

1950

Swinnerton, Frank. See Swinnerton, Frank. 1934.

1952

Deutsch, Babette. "A Look at the Worst." Chap. in Poetry in Our Time. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1952.

Embedded on page 6 in a discussion of Thomas Hardy, Deutsch mentions characteristics of Mew's work that might have appealed to Hardy. A "cruelty intrinsic to human relationships, together with a feeling for the charm of country things ...." A stanza of "The Shepherd's Prayer" is quoted as an example of a "homely simile" Hardy might have envied.

Republished: New York: Columbia University Press, 1956 and 1958; Garden City: Doubleday, 1963 and Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975.

1953

"Emotion in Restraint." Times Literary Supplement (London), 18 December 1953, 814.

A review of Collected Poems of Charlotte Mew assigns Mew a place among other women poets since Mew's best effects, intensity and simplicity, are feminine. "There is a quality here which many good poets who are

women have had in common--the presence of an emotion kept under restraint in daily life, and the absence of any wish to be striking and original." Mew's more ambitious poems, such as "Madeleine in Church," are "spoilt by a professional element, and by the attempt to put herself in the place of other people and to describe an imagined scene dramatically."

The reviewer points out a thematic preoccupation with death, parting and a yearning for faith. Formal characteristics noted are a complicated syntax, long, loose, basically iambic lines. Alida Monro's memoir, which prefaces the collection enhances the interest of the poems.

Longaker, Mark, and Edwin C. Bolles. "Some Women Poets." Chap. in Contemporary English Literature. Appleton-Century Handbooks of Literature. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953.

Claims Mew's poems have more range thematically and formally than is commonly supposed, but does not substantiate the claim. Mew is best known for her narrative compression, but it is her lyric approach, rather than plot, which captivates (p. 130). Common themes are premonition of death, absence, or a quest for peace through death (p. 131). Almost half the text, pages 130-132, is biographical.

Monro, Alida. "Charlotte Mew: A Memoir." Adelphi 29 (August 1953): 272-288.

Monro was a personal friend of Charlotte Mew. The memoir relates anecdotes and Mew's self-description from remembered conversations. Some statements are misconceptions, according to Fitzgerald's 1988 biography. The memoir is also appraised on page 64 in Bishop's 1968 thesis.

Monro describes Mew's personality as warring with itself (p. 279). The poems show how well Mew "understood the difficulties of conducting a life on the straight and narrow path in the face of a great and overwhelming emotion" (p. 279). At times she appeared gay and carefree when she actually felt miserable and discontent (p. 282).

The memoir includes excerpts from several letters. They pertain, in part, to the necessity of the printer accomodating her long lines in the The Farmer's Bride and a response to criticism of her poems. Mew's comments evince a technical comprehension and control of form with the acknowledged aim of creating a particular emotional shape.

Also published on pages vii-xx in: Collected Poems of Charlotte Mew. Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1953. Illus.

1954

A. H. See Hartley, Anthony. 1954.

Corke, Hilary. Review of Collected Poems of Charlotte Mew. In Encounter 2, no. 6 (June 1954): 78-81.

Contrasted, to her advantage, with Wallace Stevens, Corke purports that in Mew's work poet and poetry are one (p. 78). Mew's poems are about people, their relationships, and reality. She writes attractive openings, has a gift for epigram and "the technique of juxtaposition of plain statements in such a way that the reader himself is lured into providing the poetic link between them" (p. 80).

Her faults are "weak phrase, the lapses into bathos or sentimentality, the most unhappy attempts on contemporary slang" (p. 80). In sum, she is "one of the most original and inventive of poets, her forms strong and entirely individual; her forte is the long semi-dramatic poems, in which she shows a control and sense of balance and effect that are quite astonishing" (p. 80).

H., A. See Hartley, Anthony, 1954.

H[artley], A[nthony]. Review of Collected Poems of Charlotte Mew. In Spectator (London), 12 March 1954, 306.

Concisely opines "readers today are unlikely to be shaken to their depths by these sincere, but often banal, verses." Monro's memoir is considered the best part of the book.

Lawrence, Ralph. "Poetry Review." English 10 (1954): 31-32.

The opening three paragraphs on page 31 assess positively the Collected Poems of Charlotte Mew before critiquing collections by other poets. Mew's ambivalent character, as described in Monro's memoir, is reflected in the poems which vacillate among Christian, pantheistic and pagan ideas. An affinity with Browning is found in Mew's "bold technical virtuosity" since her monologues are reflective rather than dramatic like his. Sadness is Mew's most characteristic note, consistent with her themes of "insanity, decay, frustration, disillusion, longing."

Lewis, Naomi. "A Lost Poet." New Stateman and Nation: The Week-end Review (London), 9 January 1954, 44.

After a biographical introduction based on Monro's 1953 memoir, Lewis makes perceptive comments on Mew's poetry. She concludes Mew's irregular rhythms are deliberate rather than unschooled. In fact, she notes Mew "tries out, with good effect, the Rossetti five-line ballad verse" in "Pecheresse." Because of the implicit narrative and use of monologue and dialogue in her poems, a connection is drawn with the works of Hardy, Meredith and Browning.

Mew's poems convey intense experience and an immediacy of emotional response as if the feeling has never lessened with time and still haunts the speaker. Comparisons are drawn between Mew and Hardy: "the same crag-like line; the preoccupation with the sea, that severs and unites; with loss and irony, and change in human relationships."

M., W. P. Review of Collected Poems of Charlotte Mew. In Dublin Magazine, n.s. 30 (April-June 1954): 61-62.

Confines itself almost entirely to a synopsis of Monro's memoir. The reviewer finds the French phrases scattered throughout the poems a detriment to comprehension, sincerity and passion. An affinity with Hardy's verse is apparent in the "difficult determined striving to get the thing said that must be said" (p. 62).

R. C. S. See Scriven, R. C. 1954.

Redman, Ben Ray. "Beauty From Grief and Pain." Saturday Review, 24 July 1954, 17.

One paragraph in a column entitled Poetry Notes. Describes Monro's 1953 memoir. Mew's poems are skillful and varied.

Review of Collected Poems of Charlotte Mew. In New Yorker, 6 November 1954, 196.

Three sentence description of the collection. Calls Mew a "legendary figure of Georgian poetry," writer of a "handful" of "freshly poignant poems."

S., R. C. See Scriven, R. C., 1954.

S[criven], R. C. Review of Collected Poems of Charlotte Mew. In Punch, 27 January 1954, 160-161.

Two paragraphs mostly placing Mew precariously among the Georgians and noting that Alida Monro wrote the memoir which introduces the collection. "Much of Charlotte Mew's poetical thought is rather commonplace; its expression is seldom banal, and there comes flash after flash of beauty from stray lines" (p. 161).

Swinnerton, Frank. Review of Collected Poems of Charlotte Mew. In John o'London's Weekly.

Unverified. No original page cited. Mentioned in Sassoon's letter of December 30, 1953 in Meynell (1956) page 229. Warner (1981) pages xx-xxi, quotes it as follows:

> Since the poet's range is comparatively narrow I should have expected them [the poems], after thirty years, to seem a little old-fashioned. Instead, they come burning from the printed page as they always did.

W. P. M. See M., W. P. 1954.

1955

Holmes, John. "A Larger View." Poetry 86 July 1955): 240-241.

Three of four paragraphs repeat the essence of Alida Monro's 1953 memoir, taking pleasure in the fuller picture of Mew it presents. The memoir, in fact, gives great interest and value to the book. Mew's poems reveal a skill with a long line that does not adhere to a metric but to an emotion's shape. Mew's genius is taking the reader into another's life, as in "Madeleine in Church."

Kunitz, Stanley, ed. See Kunitz, Stanley, ed. 1942.

1956

Booth, Mrs. Edmund (Etta). See Meynell, Viola, ed. 1956.

de la Mare, Walter. See Meynell, Viola, ed. 1956.

Deutsch, Babette. See Deutsch, Babette. 1952.

McLachlan, Dame Laurentia, Abbess of Stanbrook. See Meynell, Viola, ed. 1956.

Meynell, Viola, ed. The Best of Friends: Further Letters to Sydney Carlyle Cockerell. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1956.

Scattered references to Charlotte Mew in letters from: Siegfried Sassoon, 1923, 1924, 1932, 1939 and 1953 (pp. 31-32, 34, 46, 69, 224-225, 228-229), Walter de la Mare, 1923 and 1925 (pp. 33, 37), Mrs. Edmund Booth, 1943 (p. 97), and Dame Laurentia McLachlan, 1928 (p. 279). Mostly contain admiration of Mew's poetry, comments on the British Civil List Pension application, Mew's personality, and her death.

Sassoon, Siegfried. See Meynell, Viola, ed. 1956.

1957

"Charlotte Mew." Poetry Broadside 1, no. 2 (Summer 1957): 2.

Reprints three poems with four paragraphs of partially biographical comments. The poems are characterized as compassionate and tender. "The reader is always aware that the poet is a woman; but this woman is mature and has no traits of coy girlishness."

1958

Deutsch, Babette. See Deutsch, Babette. 1952.

1960

Davidow, Mary Celine. "Charlotte Mew: Biography and Criticism." Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1960. Illus.

In this first, full-length work on Mew approximately eighty-three pages of 388 attend to the poems exclusively, although they are referred to throughout. Davidow uses the poems to establish Mew's worth as a poet and to establish a liason between Mew and Thomas Hardy.

In the first instance, Davidow elaborates on the technical aspects of Mew's poems. After an early preocupation with the sonnet, most of Mew's poems were rhymed, but of irregular line length and irregular rhythm. Davidow discusses how meter, rhyme, patterns of rhythm within the line, and alliteration effectively control and transmit the intense emotion of the poems. She presents extensive reviews of "The Little

Portress," "The Farmer's Bride," "I Have Been Through the Gates," and "Madeleine in Church."

Little effort is made to discuss the world-view presented by the poems. Davidow suggests a "weakening of belief in personal mortality" (p. 177) and "the problem of spiritual salvation" (p. 247) as issues central to Mew's poetic impetus. However, these themes are not elaborated.

In summary, Davidow characterizes Mew's poetry by "fresh concepts of rhythm, based, in part, on the fluctuation of the emotion, ... by compression of language, and by intensity of feeling" (p. 248). She reiterates, "intensity and compression, a deceptive surface simplicity, a tortured restlessness of spirit, a rare individual treatment of the metrical arrangement approaching the organic rhythm of the human emotions underlying the poetic content, and a multitude of private allusions characterize much of her poetry" (p. 262).

Davidow proposes that Charlotte Mew met Thomas Hardy well before the documented first meeting date of December 1918. Davidow suggests that Hardy and Mew met in 1890 (p. 221), that "Thomas Hardy was a partner in the early romance, and moreover, that Charlotte Mew bears an extraordinary resemblance in general appearance, intellectual characteristics, and nervous temperment to Sue Bridehead in Hardy's last novel, Jude the Obscure ..." (p. vi). Among the poems Davidow suggests should be read with the alleged Hardy/Mew relationship in mind are "The Farmer's Bride," "I Have Been Through the Gates," "From a Window," "Fin de Fete," "Absence," "Sea Love," and "The Road to Kerity."

Davidow's basis for this relationship is conjecture. She builds her case on similarities of images used in each writer's works. Such may be indicative of a literary union certainly. However, the similarities lose their credibility when they are too remote. An example is Davidow's suggestion that the chained dog in Mew's "Old Shepherd's Prayer" is a veiled allusion to Hardy's dog which is also described as being chained (p. 203).

At the back of all of Davidow's discussions is the fallacy that "in order to understand Charlotte Mew's poetry a certain background in biography must be established before a literate and sensitive reading of her poems is possible" (p. 59). In the best case this attitude results in irritating conjectures on what situation motivated the writing of certain poems (p. 176) or who they are addressed to (p. 175). At its worst it drives the discussions away from the poems into other topics such as Hardy's Jude the Obscure.

Overall, the treatment of the poems does not go below the surface. Davidow points at text, noting here is alliteration, here is rhythm creating emotion, here is the use of meter. But she does not explore intent, effect, or relationships between poems.

Nine poems and a story are appended that have since been collected in Warner, 1981. Also, there are ninety-one pages of correspondence to and from Mew. The letters cover many topics and some from Mew touch briefly on her poetry, including rewriting and the layout of poems on the page.

1962

Fairchild, Hoxie Neale. "More Mavericks." Chap. in Gods of a Changing Poetry. Vol. 5: 1880-1920, Religious Trends in English Poetry. New York: Columbia University Press, 1962.

Mew's poetry is treated on pages 333-338 at the end of a long chapter that assesses six other poets including Walter de la Mare and Harold Monro. Mew's poems are "much less overtly autobiographical than most women poets" (p. 333). Yet the combined frustrations--sexual and religious--are played out in many of her poems. These frustrations have a biographical source: her renunciation of the possibility of marriage because of mental illness in her family and her inability, for whatever reason, to commit to a structured religion. "Her eroticism tarnished her religion; her religion aggravated her eroticism by rebuking it" (p. 334).

Love is not associated with complete happiness in Mew's poems. Often sexual and religious longing are juxtaposed, creating tension. In poems like "She Was a Sinner," earthly and spiritual passion are reconciled, in this case with suggestions of a carnal love between Jesus and Magdalene. In other poems, the desire for physical love is less explicit, expressed as the yearnings of a woman for Christ's healing attentions. Throughout, many different poems are mentioned for their religious motifs of nuns, portress, convent, Christ and the cross.

1963

Deutsch, Babette See Deutsch, Babette. 1952.

1964

Gordan, John D. "New In The Berg Collection: 1959-1961." Bulletin of the New York Public Library 68, no. 1 (January 1964): 6-12.

Only pages seven and eight concern Charlotte Mew acquisitions. Gives biographical details surrounding and notes on letters in the collection between Mew and some of her friends. Correspondents include Sir Sydney and Lady Cockerell, Mrs. Thomas (Florence) Hardy, Louis Untermeyer, May Sinclair, and Harold Monro.

1967

Grant, Joy. "The Poetry Bookshop Publications." Chap. in Harold Monro and the Poetry Bookshop. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.

The section on Mew (pages 123-127) opens with a literary history of works published by the Poetry Bookshop. All but one page is biographical, mostly based on Alida Monro's 1953 memoir. On page 126 Grant makes generalized comments about the poems. "Stylistically, her work shows a tension between traditional metrical and verbal usage and the demands of a free spirit." Mew's poems "hung, one senses, too near the edge of sanity for comfort." Grant describes Mew's poem "Fame" rather incomprehensibly as having a "red and raw look." The poem is reprinted in full on page 127.

1968

Bishop, Jimmy Dean. "Ascent Into Nothingness: The Poetry of Charlotte Mew." Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1968.

Bishop goes beyond biography to address the poems in two ways. He considers the poems first in the historical context of the literature of the era and second as poetic utterances of a particular philosophic outlook, namely the struggle with the Void.

Bishop sums up the past criticisms of Mew's works as little more than appreciations. He suggests in passing (p. 63) that lack of biographical material is partially responsible for Mew's oblivion. He describes Mew as working within the poetic concerns of the Georgian era which as a whole has been defamed. Edward Marsh's series of anthologies, Georgian Poetry, provides a diagram of the shift from Georgianism to Neo-Georgianism. The Georgians of 1912 through 1916 wrote poetry that

was modern, anti-Victorian and realistic. They revived the dramatic poem, simple diction, natural speech and directness (p. 34-35). All of the above were effective antidotes against the preceding period; Marsh's first and second anthologies were very popular.

However, the second generation Georgians, called Neo-Georgians, of 1917 on were characterized by "languor, enervation and vapidity" (p. 41). It is these poets' works that biased contemporary and future critics against all poetry called Georgian. Bishop further distinguishes Mew on page 104:

> To the pre-World War I mind, Mew's poetry lacked the strong bite characteristic of the realistic verse of the first-generation Georgians, to the post-war mind, the intimacies revealed, the intensity of the passions felt, and the irregular verse patterns employed were disruptive elements that impinged upon the Neo-Georgian quest for idyllic serenity. Today, even the poignancy of Mew's poetry disturbs some readers; they view the poems as too confessional in nature.

In conclusion it appears that "the quality of Mew's poetry is remarkable, not when it is compared stylistically with the poetry of her more original contemporaries, like Eliot or Pound or Yeats, but when its content and style are viewed in relation to the spiritually anemic verse of the Edwardians and Neo-Georgians, and in large part the Georgians" (pp. 235-236).

The bulk of the study (104 pages) analyzes a number of Mew's poems from the premise that Mew saw the world in terms of "the emptiness, the sterility of institutions, the absence of meaningful values, the personal frustrations, the passionate longing for some sense of individual fulfillment" (p. 105). Bishop finds the totality of this world view synonymous with the "Void," which exists within us and externally to us.

The concept of the Void appears in various guises throughout the poems. The Void reveals "man as a superfluous being at the mercy of an indifferent cosmic process" (p. 108); the Void is "a curtain against which earthly events can be evaluated" (p. 110); the Void is a negative power that "cancels the validity of his [one's] acts and nullifies his [one's] emotional responses by depriving them of their customary connotations" (pp. 112-113); the Void "increases her [one's] capacity for sensuous experiences and exalts these experiences to such a degree that they have a

correspondence with erotic experience" (p. 127); and lastly (p. 133), through imagination one can

> transcend to a higher plane of experience and there ecstatically embrace the Void, for at this level, she [one] is removed from time and space, and the ecstasy of the moment becomes eternal. In this manner, the attainment of the Void is an act of fulfillment, not a surrender to negation.

Fulfillment is the aim of this struggle with the Void and Bishop examines poems in the light of four avenues to fulfillment: through love, through unity with Christ, through unity with nature, and through embracing death (p. 107). However, the poems reveal that none permanently fill the Void.

Chapter six explores how love as an avenue to fulfillment fails. There are several reasons such as psychological, social, and religious blocks, or the intellect recognizes the release from self is provisional. Intellect is made to work protectively, by perceiving nature as a transcendent source. Unfortunately, that means any destruction of nature diminishes the perceiver as well (p. 172). Poems in this discussion are "The Call," " The Fete," "The Forest Road," "The Farmer's Bride," "Saturday Market."

In chapter seven Bishop proposes that Mew's poems focus on Christ as the embodiment of both man and God and that the spiritual relationship should be tangible. However, her attraction continually reverts to rejection since she cannot create a phenomenal relationship (p. 181). Furthermore, the spiritual life requires a renunciation of the physical world, and Mew does not see eternal peace as compensation for that loss (p. 196). "Madeleine in Church," "No Me Tangito," and "Le Sacre-Coeur (Montmarte)" are used to exemplify these ideas.

While the leap of faith necessary to achieve peace through God is impossible, Mew's poems demonstrate that "she may be absorbed into the transcendent state of Nothingness, or the Void, and thereby experience the ecstatic serenity of fulfillment" (p. 207). But Mew is also ambivalent toward death, expressing fear, indifference, or embracing it ecstatically. "The Rambling Sailor," "Arracombie Wood," and "Old Shepherd's Prayer" are quoted as examples.

1969

Holroyd, Michael. "'Said To Be A Writer'." London Magazine, n.s. 9, no. 9 (December 1969): 94-99.

Mew's economy of language and lack of sentimentality set her apart from the Georgians and the Imperial poets, but appreciation of her work was hindered by lack of biographical facts (p. 94). Analysis of her work in terms of psychological or physiological phenomena were "baulked by her rage" against the intrusion of that type of interpretation (p. 95).

The physicality of spiritual suffering and passion attracted Mew. For instance, hair as a religious motif is expanded beyond the image of washing Christ's feet with it. In Mew's poems hair does not die; it is the only part of women that can belong to God.

Most of the incidents in this biographical essay come from Alida Monro's 1953 memoir or can be found in Fitzgerald's 1988 biography. A few incidents and Mew quotations, probably from letters, are unique. But Holroyd's failure to cite sources does not give the reader confidence. For instance, he describes the final visit between Mew and Alida Monro and says Mew squeezed Monro's shoulder to say goodbye, "perhaps the only time that she had ever made deliberate physical contact with anyone" (p. 99). His depiction of the meeting is not supported by Monro's published writings.

Republished in his 1973 Unreceived Opinions.

Swinnerton, Frank. See Swinnerton, Frank. 1934.

1970

Boll, T. E. M. "The Mystery of Charlotte Mew and May Sinclair: An Inquiry." Bulletin of the New York Public Library 74 (September 1970): 445-453.

Traces the friendship between Mew and Sinclair through letters written by Sinclair from 1913 to 1916, which are now part of the Berg Collection. Many letters are quoted or summarized. Boll's purpose is to find out what caused the friendship to end. The triggering incident is uncovered in a letter from novelist G. B. Stern to Rebecca West. Stern recalls that Sinclair had described how Mew once chased Sinclair into her bedroom.

This letter and other letters mentioned here are quoted in Fitzgerald's 1988 biography. Of interest is an undated letter from Sinclair apologizing for not visiting Charlotte's sister's studio. Sinclair calls the sister Madeleine (p. 452). Charlotte's sister in

real life was Anne. Madeleine is a character in her poem, "Madeleine in Church."

Pages 454-531 are a May Sinclair checklist.

1971

Davidow, Mary Celine. "The Charlotte Mew-May Sinclair Relationship: A Reply." Bulletin of the New York Public Library 75 (September 1971): 295-300.

Published in the Front Matter of the journal under the heading Communications.

Davidow takes exception to Boll's 1970 article which implies that Charlotte Mew was a lesbian and wanted a physical relationship with May Sinclair. Boll's conclusion is "tenuous and at times inconsistent with other related facts" (p. 295). She argues that the mystery in Mew's life is the identity of and her relationship with the man to whom she dedicated The Farmer's Bride.

Davidow makes several points against Boll's conclusions. She suggests the possibility that Sinclair made the incident up since Sinclair suffered in later life from an illness causing mental and physical degeneration (p. 297). Davidow questions why Sinclair, who knew Mew for three and a half years, should be considered a more reliable source then Alida Monro, who knew Mew for thirteen years. Also, other life-long friends supported the notion that Mew's moral sense kept her on a conventional path, that she dated in her youth, and voluntarily decided not to marry (p. 298).

Davidow places Sinclair's letters of May 1914 in the context of events at the time (p. 299). She posits that if Mew chased Sinclair into the bedroom on the date Boll suggests, then there are incongruities of age and situation which make it an unlikely occurrence. Subsequent letters, especially the tone of the letters, do not suggest any untoward happenings at that time, at least in Sinclair's mind. Davidow suggests Sinclair's destruction of Mew's letters to her indicates an attempt to protect herself from disgrace, rather than Mew, as suggested by Boll.

1973

Holroyd, Michael. "'Said To Be a Writer'." Chap. in Unreceived Opinions. London: Heinemann, 1973. See Holroyd, Michael, 1969.

1974

Rickword, Edgell. "New Poetry." In Essays & Opinions 1921-1931. Edited by Alan Young. Cheadle Hulme: Carcanet New Press, 1974. See Rickword, Edgell. 1921.

1975

Deutsch, Babette. See Deutsch, Babette. 1952.

Warner, Val. "Mary Magdalene and the Bride: The Work of Charlotte Mew." Poetry Nation, no. 4 (1975): 92-106.

Referring to all Mew's writings, Warner wanders inclusively through many considerations of Mew's life and work. Mew's slight literary output could be attributed to domestic duties, depression, or a perception of herself as a dilettante. A major theme in Mew's poems is a negated life and the tension created by juxtaposing thwarted life with its obverse, dreams. Among the characters dealing with negated life in all Mew's writings are mothers, brides, spinsters, nuns and prostitutes. Warner describes some of the situations in which Mew's characters find themselves. She links the short story character Elinor with Mew's conception of Emily Bronte. Mew's prostitutes characterize devotion and passion more than her brides.

Warner points out "hair" and "stair" are used as images in Mew's work but Warner does not probe their deeper significance. This surface level treatment extends throughout the article, and is ultimately unsatisfactory.

1978

Davidow, Mary Celine. "Charlotte Mew and the Shadow of Thomas Hardy." Bulletin of Research in the Humanities 81 (Winter 1978): 436-447. Illus.

Mew told Harold Monro that the poems in The Farmer's Bride hang together, mark a period and so should be published as a whole. Davidow finds a personal and artistic link between Mew and Thomas Hardy to delineate that period.

Using the same arguments she put forth in a portion of her 1960 thesis, Davidow builds her case from several points. She claims the dedication in The Farmer's Bride is suited to an old person "who has acquired an aura of immortality" and she infers Hardy to be this person (p. 439). She draws comparisons between the diction of "The Farmer's Bride," "I Have Been Through the Gates" and passages of Jude the

Obscure. She points out that Mew was experienced in transmuting prose into poetry. As an example Davidow compares passages of Mew's 1901 essay, "Notes in a Brittany Convent" with her 1903 poem "The Little Portress (St Gilda de Rhuys)." She also finds significant certain elements in Mew's "Old Shepherd's Prayer." For instance, a woman named Sue is mentioned, a name Hardy used for one of his main characters in Jude the Obscure. Also Mew's description of a dog on a chain appears to match descriptions of a dog Hardy kept on a chain in 1886.

Although Davidow wrote her Ph.D. thesis on Mew, she seems to be able to account for Hardy's interest in Mew's writing only through a personal link. If details in Mew's poems were based on actual shared experience with Hardy then "such details appearing in the poem must have been highly provocative to Thomas Hardy and may account to some degree for his great interest in The Farmer's Bride" (p. 446). Does she really mean to suggest that Mew's writing was not interesting to Hardy on its own?

1979

Bensen, Alice R. See Vinson, James, ed. 1979.

Schmidt, Michael. "Charlotte Mew (1869-1927)." Chap. in An Introduction to Fifty Modern British Poets. Pan Literature Guides. London: Pan Books, 1979.

Biographical detail is interspersed (pages 57-63) with descriptions of the scope and nature of Mew's work and critical comments of conspicuous features. He draws a link between her prose and poetry. In the stories conversation is secondary to the way something is said; gesture, facial expression, symbol, even the sequence of the images, is paramount (p. 59). This also occurs in the poetry where form is crucial. Form for Mew is organization. Yet, the content under emotional pressure, "must violate form, if the poem is to be true" (p. 59). Form is not formal perfection. He finds Bronte a contrast to Mew in the use of form. Mew's poems are "developing emotional experiences in the physical world" (p. 60).

The duality in much of Mew's work is exemplified by the recurring Magdalene figure who was redeemed only through the physical being of Christ (p. 61). The physical world is pleasure and pain, and must be given up for peace, yet faith is impossible without proof of God in the material world. In "Madeleine in Church" the persona simultaneously prays to and rejects Christ as she suffers this duality.

The "stair" is mentioned as a recurring image. A stanza of "Not for That City" is given as defining the stair, but it is not expanded.

Also published as part of the Reader's Guide Series by London: Heinemann, 1979 and by New York: Barnes and Noble, 1979.

Vinson, James, ed. Poets. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979. S.v. "Mew, Charlotte (Mary)," by Alice R. Bensen.

Mixes descriptions of Mew's literary biography, such as her discovery by Alida Monro, with her personal biography, such as her financial situation. Mew's themes of renunciation are attributed to a fear of passing on the family's trait of insanity. Her poems are described as occasionally having long lines, usually rhymed, short, irregular stanzas and expressive. The whole article (pages 687-688) amounts to one page of text, half of which is a very brief bibliography.

1981

Craig, Patricia. "Poppies." New Statesman (London), 18/25 December 1981, 43.

Most of the text in this review of two books concerns the 1981 Collected Poems and Prose. The fallen woman motif links Mew with the 1890's. The poems work, but this same Victorian motif of sin and retribution is not successful in her prose. Three lines from Irish poet James Stephen are quoted which contain several images common to Mew's work: red rose, gold ring, the bride's lips and hair. An influence from Stephens to Mew is suggested. Craig describes Mew's poetic allurements as "prettified disorder, picturesque dejection" and a mixture of wildness and sedateness governing the tone. She mentions salient biographical facts.

Feaver, Vicki. "Managing the Unmanageable." TLS: The Times Literary Supplement (London), 4 December 1981, 1413-1414.

Follows the biography and some of the critical comments in Warner's 1981 introduction to the Collected Poems and Prose. Feaver, however, dismisses the mystery of Mew's sexual preference by attributing to her a bisexuality. She turns around the issue of Hardy's influence on Mew by noting Mew's influence on two late Hardy poems. Another influence, George Eliot, shows in Mew's development of character. Feaver focuses on the difference between Mew and Emily Bronte,

particularly Mew's use of realistic detail. However, they both refuse to "resort to the common female expedient of amiability" (p. 1413).

The hallmarks of Mew's poetry are striking openings, the indirect deployment of plot, an edited speech, subversion of religious imagery. Hers is a "peculiar style of rhyming but rhythmically-irregular verse paragraphs linked by a sequence of associations" (p. 1413). Her poems are occasionally flawed by her use of a male persona and by incoherence.

Warner, Val. Introduction to Collected Poems and Prose, by Charlotte Mew. Manchester: Carcanet Press in association with Virago Press, 1981.

An extensive biographical introduction (pages ix-xxii) containing some critical comments. Focuses on biographical sources for Mew's work. Suggests that The Farmer's Bride is dedicated to Mew's insane brother Henry. This preoccupation with the possibility of a hereditary insanity led both Mew and her sister Anne to vow not to marry. Renunciation is exacerbated in Mew's case by her unaccepted lesbianism. Further, her yearning toward the church remained unfulfilled because the church restricted its attentions to the "normal."

Mew's idea of herself as a dilettante is borne out by her small output and the lack of a purposeful structure of thought behind her work. However, one formal element is her use of associated images to forward the emotional movement of the poems. Her approach to women is uniformly romantic and passionate, but with a sense of the limitations placed on them by circumstance.

Tracing a line of development between prose and poetry "there is a shift from the early prose in which the polarities of passion and negation result from the situation, to the later dramatic monologues [of the poems] where the polarities derive more from character" (p. xviii-xix). This interesting idea is not expanded.

Another example of Mew's duality is that victory always carries the seed of defeat in all things of the spirit, even in passion.

1982

Fitzgerald, Penelope. "Lotti's Leap." London Review of Books 4 (1-14 July 1982): 15-16. Illus.

Fitzgerald, who published her own full-length biography in 1984, claims Mew's poetry "was completely successful perhaps only two or three times (though that is enough for a lyric poet) ..." (p. 15). She intends,

in this article, to put right a few errors and to expand Val Warner's 1981 introduction to the Collected Poems and Prose.

Her research leads her to name the Brownings and Brontes, Alice Meynell, Francis Thompson and Tagore as authors Mew read in childhood whose influence persisted in her writing. Fitzgerald accepts Warner's description of Mew's poetry as passion unfulfilled for myriad reasons. Although Blunt (Meynell, 1940) found the use of a male persona to be a form of sexual insincerity, Fitzgerald finds the uncertainty in the poems is itself sincere. As such it appeals to some readers. She claims the shorter lyrics are best; Mew's meter is unsure because she calculated by syllable (p. 16).

Hall, Sharon K., ed. "Charlotte (Mary) Mew 1870-1928." Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism. Vol. 8. Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research Co., 1982. Illus.

Provides excerpts, some lengthy, on pages 294-302 from the following critical essays and comments, each of which is annotated above. Blunt, Wilfrid Scawen, 1918 (Meynell 1940); Corke, Hilary (1954); Davidow, Mary C. (1979); Deutsch, Babette (1952); Dickinson, Patric (1948); Fairchild, Hoxie Neale (1962); Lawrence, T. E., 1924 (Meynell 1940); Monro, Harold, 1920 (see 1928); Moore, Virginia (1932); Nevinson, Henry Wood (1916); Schmidt, Michael (1979); Swinnerton, Frank, 1934 (see 1953); Wilkinson, Marguerite (1921); and Williams-Ellis, A. (1922).

Hill, Frances. Notice of Collected Poems and Prose, by Charlotte Mew. In Times Educational Supplement (London), 5 Feburary 1982, 24.

Notice of publication.

Kossick, S. G. Review of Collected Poems and Prose, by Charlotte Mew. In Unisa English Studies 20, no. 1 (April 1982): 39.

Thomas Hardy, Virginia Woolf and other luminaries are continually quoted as praising Mew's poetry. Yet, one should heed the telling qualifiers "living" and "woman" that often fall between "best" and "poet." In spite of a narrative flair, occasional vivid images, the acclamation for Mew's poetry seems unwarranted. Especially when Mew is compared to her contemporaries Amy Lowell, Gertrude Stein, H. D., Marianne Moore, and Edith Sitwell. Mew's poetry has no distinctive voice

and is uneven. Her narrative talent is better expressed in stories.

Leighton, Angela. "Mew's Muse." Poetry Review (June 1982): 73-75.

The salient facts of Mew's life, family insanity and deaths, conscious renunciation of marriage, and attraction to the Catholic church which sanctions renunciation, helped shape Mew's role as spectator, one to whom things happen rather than one who causes things to happen. This is reflected in her poems through the distancing effects of speaking in different voices even when using the lyrical "I". The detachment is present also in the tone of the poems. However, in many poems the form belies detachment as rhythm falters and long lines break the limits of established meter. The tension between art and experience is central to Mew's poems; a struggle that is borne out through content, character and form. Because it is a struggle, damage to the self is inevitable. The poems mark not just loss, but things that never were, such as the elusive feelings of unity and peace.

Locher, Frances C., ed. Contemporary Authors. Vol. 105. Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research Co., 1982. S.v. "Mew, Charlotte (Mary) 1870-1928."

Brief biographical note (page 330) citing Twentieth-Century Authors, 1942 as a source of bibliography. The single critical comment states "through deliberately interrupted meter and ever-changing rhythm, Mew shared the poignant, secret passions that were normally hidden by her reserved behavior."

Shaw, Valerie. Review of Collected Poems and Prose, by Charlotte Mew. In British Book News (Feburary 1982): 120.

Val Warner sees Mew's poetry as out of step with contemporary literary developments, more in tune with the 1890's than the twentieth century. Mew's poetry employs a "lyrical style full of atmospheric word-pictures and free associations ...." A concern for immediacy is found throughout her work, and her effort is toward giving "the effect of a speaking voice, urgent, restless, and invariably unsatisfied in its questionings."

Watts, Marjorie. "Memories of Charlotte Mew." PEN Broadsheet, no. 13 (Autumn 1982): 13.

Unverified. Cited as being on page thirteen of the Pen Broadsheet. Quoted on page 134 of Fitzgerald's 1988 biography. Mrs. Dawson Scott relates that May Sinclair told her she was once the object of a lesbian's passion. This incident was used to explain why the Dawson Scott family no longer saw Charlotte Mew.

1983

Severance, Sibyl. "Charlotte Mew." In British Poets: 1880-1914, edited by Donald E. Stanford. Dictionary of Literary Biography, vol. 19. Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research Co., 1983. Illus.

Pages 308-313 provide mainly biographical information. Most of the comments describe the poetry and are culled from previous sources: Bishop (1968); Davidow (1960); Deutsch (1952); Grant (1967); Monro (1929); Schmidt (1979); Untermeyer (1962).

1984

Fitzgerald, Penelope. Charlotte Mew and Her Friends. London: Collins, 1984. Illus. See Fitzgerald, Penelope, 1988.

Haughton, Hugh. "Witness to the Real Thing." TLS: The Times Literary Supplement, 19 October 1984, 1190. Illus.

Reviews Fitzgerald's novelistic 1984 biography, which pads the sparse details of Mew's life with pictures from the literary society of which she was a part and biographies of her close friends. The biography explains the unhappiness inherent in the poems and Mew's affinities for the insane and fallen women. But Haughton complains because the book does not place the poetry in context. He believes Mew's poems have a place with the "new poetry of vernacular speech and psychological realism" by Hardy, Frost and Edward Thomas. The characteristics he sees in Mew's poems are immediacy of voice and use of dialect which distances the speaker from the author. Her vivid images create "precise records of outer as well as inner weathering." Each poem is a cry from the heart, uttered under pressure of feeling or circumstance. Her homosexuality surely contributes to the complex sympathies involving the farmer's frustrated desire and his wife's recoil from the male touch in "The Farmer's Bride".

McCallister, Myrna J. Review of Collected Poems and Prose, by Charlotte Mew. In Library Journal 109 (1 June 1984): 1133.

Mew is divided from the Georgians because of her subjects and her technique. Her fear of insanity and her secret lesbianism caused her to write poems "focused on the pain of denial, elevating renunciation to a sacred passion." Lists three of Mew's literary admirers: Thomas Hardy, May Sinclair, and Virginia Woolf.

Mizejewski, Linda. "Charlotte Mew and the Unrepentant Magdalene: A Myth in Transition." Texas Studies in Literature and Language 26, no. 3 (Fall 1984): 282-302.

Mew's poems that deal with women who are promiscuous, who compare themselves introspectively with Mary Magdalene and reach for Christ or another male redeemer, are considered here under the label magdalene poems. The magdalene poems have roots in a literary tradition that was popular in the Victorian era. In the literature, the fallen woman was a woman of extremes. First physically bad then spiritually good she moves, through redemption, from one exclusive state to another. Christianity, in fact, extinguishes her sexuality. The pure woman is idealized and adored, finally becoming "mysteriously nonhuman" (p. 284).

Mew's poems are a radical approach to the biblical story, to literary tradition, and indirectly to the social mores of the time that made use of prostitutes while condemning them. In "She Was a Sinner" Mew's flower imagery portrays Christ sharing Magdalene's sensuality by wearing her red flowers. After redemption the flowers become a burning white, still vibrant and passionate, and importantly, still accessible to the senses.

The reinterpretation of Magdalene in "Madeleine in Church" is complex. Mew brings her fallen woman to life by mentioning the painted face, an admission of the falseness or shallowness of her facade. The Fall, as defined in the poem, is not a punishment for sexual experience, but more basically, the result of a misplaced trust in the senses. Mew rejects the Christian belief of the world as untrustworthy and evil. Accepting the strictures of church and the strictures of society means discarding some childhood truths, one of which is the unity of soul and body. This unity is the cause, not the result of, sexual experience. For one who chooses the material world there is the constant betrayal by temporal beauty and pleasure. And for one

who is outcast by society there is the further loss of the consolation of social structures, among them religion, their community and stability. It is this isolation Madeleine struggles with and attempts to thwart by bringing the world into contact with Christ again. In the poem, Madeleine believes there was a carnal relationship between Magdalene and Christ through which she is able to construct a model of union between body and spirit, passion and peace. The dream she ever follows is harmony.

"Pecheresse," "Le Sacre-Couer," and "Monsieur Qui Passe" are all magdalene variations. In the latter the woman's specific sin is unknown, but the poem deals explicitly with the failure of the male redeemer to absolve her of guilt. In fact, he rejects her and dismisses her emotion as a case of female nerves. In this poem "anger is centered on male contempt for women and the female frustration of not being listened to, taken seriously, or addressed" (p. 300). Mew attacks the structures that try to silence women in her poem "Absence," using Christ as a symbol of those silencing structures. She imagines if His hands were over her mouth she would still answer love's call.

1985

Drabble, Margaret, ed. Oxford Companion to English Literature. 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985. S.v. "Mew."

Brief biographical entry on pages 644-645 attributes Mew's minimal literary output to financial problems. One sentence about the poems: "Her poems are notable for a restraint of expression combined with a powerful and passionate content which distinguishes her from many of her Georgian contemporaries" (p. 645).

Hanscombe, Gill. "Part Works." New Statesman (London), 18 January 1985, 29.

An ambivalent review of Fitzgerald's 1984 biography along with another book. They are paired because their subjects are both lesbians. Fitzgerald is complemented for constructing an intelligent, sympathetic biography from unpromising material. Yet, Hanscombe is bothered by the lack of a reason for Fitzgerald to undertake writing Mew's life and by a concern for Fitzgerald's ability to comprehend a lesbian life. Of "The Farmer's Bride," he says "this is a lesbian's poem, a world in which sexual congress between a man and his 'bride' simply has no place." An acceptance of lesbianism as

the basis of Mew's reality would integrate the lesbian experience into the assessment of her work.

1987

Crisp, Shelley J. "The Woman Poet Emerges: The Literary Tradition of Mary Coleridge, Alice Meynell, and Charlotte Mew." Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1987.

In a 267 page feminist analysis of three poets, Crisp studies the influence of gender identity on author, character, audience and critic. She precedes from Elaine Showalter's theory that women writers are a subculture within a dominant male tradition. Showalter proposes an evolution of women's writing through three stages: Feminine (imitative of dominant standards) to Feminist (dissension and declaration of autonomy) to Female (discovering self and identity). Crisp's dissertation is divided evenly among discussions of the underlying theory and of each poet.

Crisp maintains that Mew was fated to oblivion because of the historical treatment of women writers (p. 2). Even though she was writing at the Female stage "literary self-annihilation" (p. 3) was her only option. Crisp notes (p. 14):

> In the Female phase, Showalter's woman writer firmly establishes a poetics of her own melding. Yet ... the fateful, regressive traits of conflict and denial flare into a haunted Female aesthetic that threatens the survival of any poetic identity.

Crisp summarizes (p. 43):

> the reluctance to speak openly and clearly, the public renunciation and the private poetry are indicative of the prevalent gender distinction late Victorian poets subscribed to .... The private avowal of poetic aspiration, skewed speech, and oblique images secured for women their only defense against the derision and fallacious critical responses they were bound to receive.

Crisp finds Mew's recognition of Emily Bronte as a literary mentor an indication of the Female stage. Furthermore, "in her use of female iconography, Mew is a Female poet subjectively exploring the rigid determinism of a culture whose psyche refused to free the second sex from subordinate roles, whose corruption ruined innocence and denied paradise" (p. 184). Mew also successfully fuses the two streams of male and

female artistry represented by her two literary mentors, Thomas Hardy and Emily Bronte (p. 186).

Discussing in particular "In Nunhead Cemetary," "Ken," "The Quiet House," "Le Sacre-Coeur," "Madeleine in Church," and "The Farmer's Bride," Crisp finds that Mew continually addresses the frustration of a woman who challenges social restrictions by exploring her sexuality. "But she finds resurrected in her likeness a remonstrating harlot reminding her to keep to a place she cannot honor" (p. 206).

Crisp discusses Mew's use of the common idiom in an attempt "to make subjective consciousness a source of true witness" (p. 200). In discussions of Mew's poetics she points out that rhyme often serves to move the reader from one rhythm to the next (p. 202). Mew used the same poetic devices as other early modernists, such as fragmented thought, synecdochic illusiveness, dissociated references and symbols (p. 203).

Crisp refers to Davidow, Mizejewski and Collard in her study. She briefly discusses Mew's contemporary critical reception.

Unfortunately, much of this study fits the poems to a preconceived theory rather than developing a theory from the structure and content of the poems.

Leithauser, Brad. "Small Wonder." New York Review of Books 33, no. 21-22 (15 January 1987): 25-26, 31. Illus.

In a review of Fitzgerald's biography, Leithauser concentrates on explicating the poems. Although much of Mew's work has received the neglect it deserves (p. 25), he finds much to value in her shorter poems. Madness is her central theme and the distancing, both physically and spiritually, in the poems is a reflection of her life's circumstances. Going one step further he sees madness as thwarted self-fulfillment and so kin to unrequited love. He says "much of her poetry may be viewed as musings in isolation upon variant forms of isolation" (p. 25).

Besides Hardy he finds a link with Marianne Moore. He sees Mew's use of few but repeated rhymes in a single poem a "curious auditory paradox which might be summarized as 'More than too much is not excessive'" (p. 26). Leithauser looks at the way the poems work and he describes the effect the mechanics have on the poems' successes quite clearly. In "Sea Love" he points to images that bring the poem to life, how they are appropriate to the untutored voice which speaks them, and how the mutation of the sea into a vanishing breeze generates a sense of wonder, not remorse. "From a Window," "A Quoi Bon Dire," and "The Farmer's Bride" are given equal treatment, with attention paid to the

words, the way changes to the rhyme and the meter suggest emotional changes. He suggests how the choice of words can effect a poem's success, preventing it from being mundane. The significance of the repetition of words, as in "The Farmer's Bride," is considered and how the meaning of the words changes through the poem.

1988

Augustine, Jane. "Charlotte Mew." In An Encyclopedia of British Women Writers, edited by Paul Schlueter and June Schlueter. Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, vol. 818. New York: Garland Publishing, 1988.

Reiterates (pages 321-323) the same stance as taken by other critics. Mew's writing was an outlet for feelings that could not be expressed through behavior. The tension between warring elements of her nature, between renunciation and desire, feeds the tensions in the poems. Discusses principle themes of thwarted love and sexual and spiritual passion. Along with the recurring motifs of the color red and a rural setting, she mentions the intense look which passes between two individuals linking them in an emotional moment. An example is the ending of "Ken." Presents the bare facts of Mew's life.

Fitzgerald, Penelope. Charlotte Mew and Her Friends: With a Selection of Her Poems. With a Foreward by Brad Leithauser. Radcliffe Biography Series. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1988. 26 illus.

In the only full-length biography of Charlotte Mew, Fitzgerald does not hint at any romantic tie between Mew and Hardy. Instead she reports Mew as having been in love with Ella D'Arcy and May Sinclair. The literary environment and the lives of principle participants of the time are described. Mew's published stories and poems are given the context of where they were published, the history of the journals, and their literary impacts. This allows the reader some idea of Mew's potential influences.

Fitzgerald makes minimal but insightful comments on Mew's poetry. For instance, "like Hardy and Housman, she was a poet of delayed shock" (p. 45). Poems are subtly linked to biography as emotional responses to known factual events, rather than as support for conjecture. They do not have to have been written during the time period of the experience that generated them to be emotionally connected. Fitzgerald cites the importance of Davidow's 1960 thesis as a source.

Leithauser's introduction is an edited version of his 1987 essay.

First published in 1984 by Collins, London England, without the selected poems or foreword.

Fromm, Harold. "Too Few, Miss Mew." American Scholar 57 (Autumn 1988): 632-636.

Extensive summary of Fitzgerald's biography. Fromm says Mew's poems are not exactly free verse and this indecision may reflect Mew's ambivalent personality. Generally, the poems use first person, a convoluted syntax, rough verbal texture, shifting line lengths and stanzas (p. 635). He finds "Madeleine in Church" expresses hostility and yearning, but it is unclear what is thwarted. In Mew's essay on Emily Bronte he finds a self-portrait of one whose passion is unappropriated by sex, one who was a pagan. Ultimately, Mew's use of her literary talent was therapeutic.

Leithauser, Brad. See Leithauser, Brad. 1987.

Parini, Jay. "Companionship Was Everything." New York Times Book Review, 7 August 1988, 15.

Review of Fitzgerald's 1988 biography. Calls it an "act of literary excavation." Friendships were central to Mew's emotional development. Mew's capacity for gratitute toward those who instructed and helped her is named one of her finest traits. Attributes to her male mentors the most impact on her career. He only mentions specifically Hardy's influence on her poems' subject matter and tone. This stance seems unduly dismissive of female mentors. Lucy Harrison, Alida Monro, May Sinclair and Mrs. Dawson Scott in particular come to mind.

1989

Hedberg, Johannes. "Charlotte Mew: A Forgotten Poet?" Moderna Sprak 83, no. 1 (1989): 20-22.

Brief introduction to Mew's poems and standing in the literary world as exemplified by "Sea Love," "A Quoi Bon Dire" and the fact she is rarely represented in anthologies.

His critical comments on the two poems printed here parallels those of Leithauser's 1987 article, which he quotes. Also follows Leithauser's assessment of Larkin's anthology which seems a digression.

Owens, Jill T. "Charlotte Mew." English Literature in Transition: 1880-1920 32, no. 2 (1989): 229-232.

Reviews Fitzgerald's 1988 biography. The biography is useful to scholars studying the era since it deals substantially with other literary persons of the era. Also serves to make Mew's poetry better known, though the poems serve biography throughout.

Fitzgerald has done the biographer's work: generalizing, noting patterns, explaining inconsistencies. Mew's relationship with Ella D'Arcy is used by Fitzgerald as the first example of a pattern that would surface ten year later with May Sinclair. By the conclusion of the book the reader feels suppositions have been proven.

Smith, James. "Mew, Charlotte." In British Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide, edited by Janet Todd. New York: Continuum, 1989.

Pages 462-464 provide mostly biographical details as supplied in Fitzgerald (1988). The central themes of Mew's poetry follow indirectly the central difficulties of her life. The persona of each poem is a mask through which Mew speaks. Thwarted love is exemplified by "The Farmer's Bride;" life thwarted as a result of insanity is exemplified by "Ken." Suggests possible technical influence of Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market." Line, stanza length and rhyme control emotion.

Wagner-Martin, Linda. "Madness and Gentility." American Book Review 10, no. 6 (January-February 1989): 21.

Although Fitzgerald's biography offers some recognition for Mew's work, Wagner-Martin objects to Fitzgerald's approach. Fitzgerald is guilty of imputing motives and conclusions that are unsubstantiated by fact and fix on Mew's unrequited lesbian passion as the rationale for her actions. Using Charlotte's first stay in Paris as an example, Wagner-Martin offers opposing motivation for Mew's actions. Fitzgerald depicts Mew following Ella D'Arcy, declaring her love and being rejected. Wagner-Martin postulates that depression, which Mew suffered repeatedly, fueled by an inability to cope with life in France (Mew's French was bad), caused Mew's subsequent hysterical, erratic behavior.

Wagner-Martin suggests an important aspect of Mew's life choices has been overlooked. The conflict of choosing art over family responsibilities exacts its own price.

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